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OR
THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY

BY

FRANCIS NEPVEU
Of the Society of Jesus

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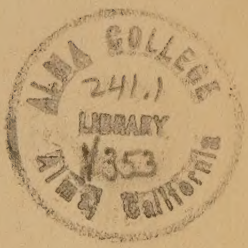
CHARLES B. FAIRBANKS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOHN C. REVILLE, S.J., Ph.D.



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INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the sixteenth century, during the reigns of Charles IX, Henry III and Henry IV, France had greatly suffered from the inroads of Protestantism. At the beginning of the seventeenth, she had won back most of her children to the fold, with the exception of that influential and wealthy portion which had centered their power in the seaport of Rochelle and a few other towns granted to them by Henry IV under the terms of the Treaty of Nantes. Undoubtedly the influence of Spain and Italy had their share in this revival of the old Faith. The fame of the sanctity of the great Saints which had shed such luster over the two Latin peninsulas, had penetrated into France. The works of St. Teresa, of St. John of the Cross, the lives of St. Ignatius, of St. Francis Xavier, of St. Charles Borromeo and St. Aloysius Gonzaga were well known and eagerly read in France. The sons of St. Ignatius, men like Auger and Coton, had worked as missionaries among the people, professors like Maldonatus had lectured in the University of Paris. The clergy had felt the influence of eminent ecclesiastical reformers like St. Charles Borromeo and St. Philip Neri.

Henry IV had sincerely abjured Calvinism and openly professed the Catholic Faith, which had always been held by his predecessors on the throne. Thousands of Frenchmen, who for a while had been caught by the novel and easy-going doctrines of the Reformation, had returned to the Faith of their fathers, disgusted as they were with the tenets of Calvinism, which in the midst of the religious wars of the period, had produced nothing but intellectual, religious,

social and political anarchy. The proverbially sound French sense of proportion and values reasserted itself and swept away that spirit of discord and disorder which had almost ruined the country during the period of the religious conflict. In spite of the opposition of the Paris Parliament and of the Sorbonne, the decrees of the Council of Trent were slowly introduced into the country and wrought a salutary reform in the ranks of the people and the clergy.

No doubt there were worldly and temporal motives in this change of heart on the part of the nation. If so many Frenchmen came back to the old Faith, it was because that Faith had been the Faith of their ancestors for centuries. It had been a part of the nation. The nation's greatest glories and triumphs had found its source an inspiration in that heritage. Under a Catholic king and with the whole nation professing the Catholic religion, the kingdom had been united. It had found order and peace.

But the nation, too much preoccupied with the external benefits the unity of Faith brought in its train, had not felt that burning devotion of zeal, that flame of mysticism, which blazed with so clear and penetrating a light, for instance, in the countrymen of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. But a wonderful Saint, one of the best-balanced minds we meet with in the history of the Church, one of the most simple, winning and attractive of men, St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), brought true piety and devotion back to the world and gave them a heart and a soul. The seventeenth century was at its dawn when Francis de Sales wrote his "Introduction to the Devout Life" and his "Treatise on the Love of God"; it was closing when the Jesuit, François Nepveu published *L'Esprit du Christianisme, ou la Conformité du Chrétien avec Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1700), which, in the translation of Charles Fairbanks, we present to our readers under a new title, *Like Unto Him.*

St. Francis de Sales was in many ways the pioneer of the French Catholic revival of the seventeenth century. He was bishop, missionary, founder of a religious Order, statesman, preacher, spiritual guide and director of souls. He is the founder of French pulpit oratory, one of the most genuinely eloquent preachers of the century which heard the ringing accents of Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Massillon, Mascaron and Fléchier. He does not preach like these. He is more simple, more direct, more popular, more homely. But had he not pointed the way and cleared it of the encumbrances which choked it, his successors would not have preached so well. He was also a great ecclesiastical reformer. St. Vincent de Paul, to whom the French clergy owe so much, closely imitated his methods. Side by side with the gentle Bishop of Geneva and "Monsieur Vincent," as he was generally known, are to be found the admirable figures of the Cardinal de Bérulle, the founder of the French Oratory, of the saintly Bourdoise, and at a later time, of the stern Abbot de Rancé, the reformer of La Trappe, together with those of M. Olier, and his brethren of Saint-Sulpice. Through the labors of these saintly men, although at times unseemly scandals crept into the ranks of the clergy, a salutary reform was introduced into the lives of the French priesthood. From their ranks it filtered down to the lower levels of the people. For a century, in spite of the inroads of Jansenism, which prevailed chiefly among the upper classes, although in some places it sifted down to the common people with disastrous effects, the French nation was at heart, soundly Catholic.

While under Louis XIII, in the first half of the seventeenth century, eminent prelates like François de la Rochefoucauld, Saints like Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, and Blessed Louise de Marillac, carried on the Catholic revival in the ranks of the clergy and the religious Orders, their work was continued

throughout the long-protracted reign of Louis XIV by others like St. Margaret Mary, the Venerable Eudes, the great missionaries Julian Maunoir, the blind Oratorian, Lejeune and Le Nobletz. If Jansenism threatened for a time to dry up the sources of Catholic devotion, and the rebellious designs of the Gallican party, supported by the power of Louis XIV, came perilously near to a schism from Rome, the nation gradually threw off the dangerous germs. The vigorous faith of the people can be proven by one solid argument, the zeal and fervor of French missionaries in foreign lands. To mention but one field alone: the epic of the Catholic heroes in Canada, Jesuits, Recollects and Sulpicians, is a tale of heroism and self-sacrifice, which stirred the heart not only of children within the fold but even of that stern Puritan historian, Francis Parkman, whose one-hundredth anniversary Americans have just celebrated. The name of the Jesuits Brébœuf, D'Alouez, Dablon and especially of Jacques Marquette, are deeply imbedded on the pages of the history of the United States, while the noble figures of Maisonneuve and of Marie de l'Incarnation, the Teresa of the New World, as Bossuet called her, stand out on the very outposts of civilization in the North, as heralds of a brighter dawn.

While priests and religious were giving these admirable examples of sanctity in this great age, which, it cannot be gainsaid, had also its darker side, the laity and the Faithful at large gave splendid examples of vigorous faith and piety. Hardened infidelity was rarely seen, except towards the end of the century. Then *les libertins,* or free-thinkers, as we know from the pages of La Bruyère, became rather numerous. But even they were exceptions. Men and women, like Condé, Turenne, Villars and Luxembourg, like the Duchesse de la Vallière and the Marquise de Fontanges, like Henriette, Duchess of Orleans, who had passed their days in the license of camp and court, turned to God in their last mo-

ments and gave every sign of a sincere and genuine repentance. The literature of the reign, at least in its most glorious monuments, the literature of the *Pensées* of Pascal, of the *Esther* and *Athalie* of Racine, the sermons of Bourdaloue, the *Discours sur l'Histoire universelle* of Bossuet, the *Polyeucte* of Corneille, paid tribute to the highest sentiments of religion, and was penetrated with its principles. Other notes, notes of revolt and cynicism, are indeed heard, but they mar the general harmony. Seldom, except in the days of the early Fathers, did the Christian pulpit gather together such a group of eloquent preachers as Francis de Sales, who opened the century, and Massillon, who brought it to a close; as Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fléchier and Mascaron, who saw it at the height of its glories. If the cloister was sanctified by the heroism and the sanctity of De Rancé and St. Margaret Mary, the ranks of the highest society witnessed the virtues of that gallant soldier, Armand de Courville, of the Secretary of the Treasury, Claude Le Pelletier, of Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain, Chancellor of France; of Ferdinand Jobelot, a precursor of Ozanam, of Pelletier Destouches, a Christian social worker in the truest sense of the word, of Buche, workman and apostle of the workingmen, of the Duc de Ventadour, the pious founder of the well-known and much-discussed "Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement," which, though it may have lapsed from its original fervor, undoubtedly was productive of great good.

It would be extraordinary if the great principles of Christian ascetism were not discussed and explained in an age so prolific of Saints and holy men, and in a manner worthy of its high purpose. And so we see the century beginning with the spiritual masterpieces of St. Francis de Sales and brought to a close with *L'Esprit du Christianisme* of François Nepveu. If Fénelon wrote the *Direction pour la Conscience d'un Roi* for the spiritual guidance of the Duc

de Bourgogne, he wrote also a little book, where sound pedagogy is to be found side by side with the most practical spiritual counsels, *De l'Éducation des filles.* While Bollandus and Papebroke were restoring to a scientific basis the science and art of hagiography, Father Bouhours, the Jesuit, who was looked upon by all the writers of the classic age of Louis XIV as the best critic of the times, was writing the *Life of St. Francis Xavier,* while from Canada the Jesuit *Relations* were telling in simple, unadorned style, the triumphs of the Faith in New France. It is impossible to do more than just refer to such spiritual writers as Louis Lallemant, who has been compared to the mystic Balthasar Alvarez, to Crasset, Surin, Nouet, Saint-Jure and Le Gaudier, to the Venerable Eudes and Venerable Claude de la Colombière.

Of the author himself of the present volume, little need be said, and indeed, not very much is known. He was born on April 26, 1639, in the thriving little northern seaport of St. Malo. Five years before, a Malouin sailor, sturdy Jacques Cartier, had made his memorable journey up the St. Lawrence. Every Malouin then felt the lure of the sea, and in the seventeenth century, hundreds of Malouins passed their lives either fishing for cod off the Great Newfoundland Banks or Miquelon, or followed the hardy French explorers who thridded the waters of the St. Lawrence, the Saguenay, or Hudson's Bay. François Nepveu must have heard the call of the wide reaches of the ocean. But he resisted the summons, and, when little more than a lad, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1654. No extraordinary event seems to have marked his life as scholastic or priest. It was the life perhaps a little "humdrum" of the ordinary Jesuit such as hundreds of his brethren were leading in the colleges of La Flèche, Clermont, or Rouen. It was remarkable for its unobtrusive piety, its love of letters and of the sacred sciences. He mingled but little

in society around him. He never attained to any high office in the Order. He taught humanities, according to standards and methods to which his countrymen are again returning; he lectured for some time on philosophy. He died on February 8, 1708, while Rector of the college of Rennes. Almost all that he wrote has for its purpose to foster solid and practical piety. His principal works are: *De l'Amour de Jésus-Christ* (Nantes, 1664; Paris, 1756); *Exercices intérieurs pour honorer Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1791; Lyons, 1836); *Manière de se préparer à la mort* (Paris, 1692, 1697; *Retraite spirituelle* (Paris, 1708). His *Pensées et refléxions chrétiennes pour tous les jours de l'année* (Paris, 1695) has been translated twice into Latin (at Ingoldstadt, 1727, and Heidelberg, 1774), twice into German and twice into Italian.

L'Esprit du Christianisme, called in this edition *Like Unto Him,* is the one book by which Father Nepveu had been for some time best known to English readers. Translated by Charles Fairbanks, it was published over sixty years ago, by the New York firm of Dunigan, to which our Catholic fathers owe a debt of gratitude for its generous support of Catholic literature at a time when Catholic books in English were comparatively few. *Like Unto Him* is a simple, solid and practical book. It does not possess the quaint style, the incommunicable charm, the tenderness, the childlike naïveté, the quiet humor of the *Philothea,* or the *Introduction to a Devout Life,* of the Bishop of Geneva, but it has the "Jesuit touch." It is filled with the substance and marrow of the Gospel. Like the *Philothea,* however, but by different methods, it reaches the heart, and touches the lives of men and women of every class, profession and rank. It deals with one of the fundamental principles of Christianity, the imitation of Our Lord. The five short books, which make up the work, treat first of the motives which should prompt the Christian to the imitation of

Christ; then the practice of that imitation is fully explained; the last three parts treat of the virtues which we ought to imitate in Christ, and their bearing upon our duties to Almighty God, our neighbor and ourselves.

Father Nepveu's original title *L'Esprit du Christianisme* could scarcely be improved upon. He treats of the inner spirit, the very essence of Christianity and the Gospel: *Christianus alter Christus,* the Christian is another Christ. Whatever other motives there may exist for the renunciation and the self-abnegation which must mark the Christian, there can be no doubt, that, in the concrete, the highest duty as well as the highest dignity of asceticism according to the Gospel is to follow the example which the life of Our Lord gives us from the Cradle to the Cross. The life of the Christian must, even in its most imperfect stages, be a life of renunciation and sacrifice. We cannot love Christ, if we do not keep His commandments. These are, in our present fallen state, always something of a check and a restriction on the unbridled license of our inclinations and our passions. To be a Christian at all is to follow the crucified and suffering Christ; to be a perfect Christian is to be in all things conformed unto His image, and to follow His example. To follow Him is to take up our Cross as He did. *He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me* (Matt. x, 38); *If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me* (Mark viii, 34). Renouncement, sacrifice, immolation, is the law, the life of Our Lord. Renouncement, sacrifice, immolation of self, resembling the immolation of Our Lord on the Cross, must be the law and the life of the Christian. If the Christian is ashamed of the Cross and its lessons, Our Lord will be ashamed of him. The Christian must love the Cross passionately, he must be enamored of its sacred ignominies and its shames. He, therefore, not only must do that which is strictly commanded under pain of sin

so as not to offend God mortally, but he will impose sacrifices and crosses upon himself, which will bring him into closer conformity with the Divine Model.

Like Unto Him therefore repeats in a simple way the high and chivalric note which Ignatius, the spiritual master of François Nepveu, so martially sounded in that splendid contemplation of his *Spiritual Exercises,* "The Reign of Christ." It is a lesson that our selfish age, so indulgent of its whims and fancies, of its sinful pleasures, needs repeatedly to hear. No doubt many will not heed the warning of this old-fashioned Jesuit of more than two centuries ago. It is so trite, stale and uninteresting. Yet the lessons François Nepveu teaches in his little book are sounder, more necessary and enduring than the wisdom of philosophers. If men not only read the volume now given to our Catholic readers, but lived it in their daily lives, and brought something of the "spirit of Christianity" into their private, social, business, political, and industrial relations, peace, order, prosperity, honor and dignity would speedily return to us and blossom anew on the ruins of a shattered civilization.

JOHN C. REVILLE, S.J.
Editor-in-Chief.

LIKE UNTO HIM

OR

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY

Book the First

OF THE NECESSITY OF IMITATING JESUS CHRIST, AND OF THE EASE WITH WHICH WE MAY DO SO

PART I

Of the Necessity of Imitating Jesus Christ

THE whole economy of our salvation turns upon three great mysteries and depends wholly upon them: upon the mystery of predestination, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, and the mystery of our spiritual regeneration by Baptism. *First.* It is necessary, as the Apostle says, that to be saved we should be predestined from all eternity to be saints and the children of God by adoption: *As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity. Who had predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ* (Ephes., i). *Secondly.*

It was necessary that, to execute in time the decree of this eternal predestination, and to deliver man from the evil into which he was plunged by the sin of Adam,—the eternal Father should send His Son as our Redeemer, and that He should be made man like ourselves; and this was accomplished in the mystery of the Incarnation. *For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him* (John, iii). *Finally.* It was necessary that the fruit of the Incarnation, the price of our redemption, should be applied to us by Baptism, that spiritual regeneration which changes us from children of wrath and slaves of Satan into children of divine grace and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, *and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ* (Rom., viii).

Now, from these three mysteries may be drawn three strong motives for the imitation of Jesus Christ—three reasons why we must necessarily imitate Him if we wish to be saved. *First,* we cannot be saved if we are not predestined, and we cannot be predestined if we are not like our Lord Jesus Christ. *Secondly,* we shall not be saved unless we enter into the designs which God had in sending His Son to us for a Redeemer; and we do not enter into the designs of God in the Incarnation if we do not labor unceasingly to imitate His Son. Lastly, we shall not be saved if the price of redemption is not applied to us by the regeneration of Baptism, which makes us Christians: and we are not true Christians if we do not follow Christ, and try to make ourselves like Him.

CHAPTER I

We Cannot Be Predestined if We Are not Like Jesus Christ

THIS is not the place to enter upon the consideration of that great question which has so long divided the schools of theology—whether or not we are predestined to glory before or after the prevision of merits. Let us commence by proposing two truths on which all theologians agree: *first,* that only the predestined will be saved; *second,* that the predestined will not be saved without the performance of good works; and that they cannot arrive at the eternal happiness to which they are predestined without having merited it.

This being supposed, we may safely say that the most essential merit, the most infallible means of acquiring this happiness, is conformity with Jesus Christ. St. Paul teaches this truth in his Epistle to the Romans: *For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son: that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren.* It is needless to prove the truth of this, which is so clearly stated by the Apostle, and which is an article of faith. But *first,* if our blessed Lord is the first among the predestined, we cannot be predestined unless we are His co-heirs, unless we are His brethren; and how can we be His brethren if we do not try to sustain our relationship with Him, and to make ourselves like Him?

Secondly, if Jesus Christ is the chief of the predestined, we cannot be predestinated unless we are His members, unless we are immediately united with Him; and we cannot be united with Him without being at the same time animated with His spirit; and if we are animated with His spirit, we live the same life that He does, so that we can say with St. Paul: *And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal., ii). And if we live of His life, shall we not share in His thoughts and His affections? This it is which constitutes that perfect conformity of heart and mind with Him, which is at the same time the most unmistakable mark, the surest pledge and most efficacious cause of our predestination.

The Apostle of the Gentiles furnishes us with a third proof of this truth. It is certain that predestination is the effect of a special bounty and tenderness which Almighty God feels towards certain persons, whom He distinguishes from others by separating them from the lost, and reserving them for eternal happiness. Now the eternal Father only feels this tenderness, only makes this happy distinction, for those whom He has foreseen from all eternity, will be like His only begotten Son.

To understand fully the force of this reason, and the consequences flowing from it, we must suppose that the principal or rather the unique object of the contemplation and satisfaction of the eternal Father is the Divine Word—His Son. In contemplating Himself from all eternity in the reflection of His own infinite perfections, He begot His Word in His own likeness; so that the Divine Word is His

perfect living and consubstantial image; and thus for the same reason that He has for loving Himself infinitely, because being infinitely perfect He is infinitely to be loved (and an infinite being only is capable of loving infinite perfection adequately), for this same reason He must necessarily love His substantial image, the Divine Word; so that the Word shall be the object of His infinite complacency, the object that shall (if we may say so) exhaust His love, or rather confine it, so that it cannot be poured out upon any but His own divine self, or upon some being closely related to Him. God loves His Son in Himself, because He is His living and substantial image, and beyond Himself He only loves those who are the living images of His Son; so that we may say that God loves only men whom He has beforehand filled with His graces, and that He continues to crown them with His mercies just in proportion as He sees in them a resemblance to His only begotten Son. Our blessed Saviour says: *For the Father Himself loveth you: because you have loved me* (John, xvi), and we know that the effect of love for Him is to render us like Him. Thus, if the eternal Father observes many of the traits of His Son in us, He loves us much and crowns us with blessings; if He sees few of those traits, He gives us little; if He observes none, He withholds His bounty from us; and if He finds in us a character opposed to that resemblance to the divine original which we ought to present, He hates us and visits us with His reprobation and condemnation.

Everything that the eternal Father has done in

the order of grace and glory, has been done to bring us into a perfect state of resemblance to Jesus Christ. *By Him all things consist.* It is for this that He sent His Son into the world; that He wished Him to become man, so that being made like us, we should be more inclined and could more easily make ourselves like Him; it is for this that He sent His Holy Spirit upon the earth, that we might be *strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man.* If then He predestined us to be His children by adoption, it is by our relationship to Jesus Christ; if He crowns us with His mercies, it is by Jesus Christ, for Him, and for the sake of our relationship to Him. Finally, it is for this that God has granted us so many graces and benefits, has communicated so much light to us, and has given us all His commandments and counsels. What a cause for confusion is it for us, O God, that Thou should'st have done so much to impress on our hearts the image of Thy Son, and that we should have corresponded so little to Thy mercy!

There are but three mentions made in the New Testament of the eternal Father having spoken to man: and *on all of those three* occasions He spoke to inculcate the love and imitation of His Son. The first time was on the banks of the Jordan, when the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended under the form of a dove upon the head of our blessed Lord, and a voice was heard saying, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" The same voice was heard for the second time on Mount Thabor, speaking in the same words, and

adding, *"Hear Him."* That is to say, it is Jesus Christ whose words we ought to believe, and whose examples we must follow. This repetition upon Mount Thabor makes it appear as if the eternal Father was unwilling that the disciples should misunderstand or forget that divine declaration. The third time when the voice of the eternal Father was heard by men, was in Jerusalem, when certain of the Gentiles having showed great anxiety to see our Lord, He besought His Father to glorify His name, and the response came from heaven: *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again* (John, xii). Without doubt He spoke of that glory for which His Son prayed after the Last Supper, saying: *And now glorify Thou me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee* (John, xvii). As if He wished to say that, as in the blessed Trinity He is the object of the eternal complacency of His Father, and His living and substantial image;—so He desires to be on earth the object of the joy and gratitude of the elect, their model, even before their eyes, to be copied and expressed in their daily lives, so that they may become images of Him. And it is this that the eternal Father promises when He says that He will glorify His name again. It is in consequence of this promise that our blessed Saviour prayed to His Father for His disciples: *That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us* (John, xvii). That is, that they may express by their union and conformity with Jesus Christ, His perfect union with His Father, and that

thus they will merit to be His chosen and predestined ones.

To conclude, however, let us express, in a few words, the full force of our reasoning in this chapter: it is certain that we shall not be saved unless we are predestined, and we cannot be predestined without being like Jesus Christ—since without that we can neither be His members nor His brethren, nor his co-heirs, nor objects of the complacency and love of the eternal Father, so that we cannot be saved without laboring constantly to imitate Jesus Christ, and to make ourselves like Him.

Our uncertainty concerning our predestination is such a cause of fear and inquietude for us, that to reassure and calm ourselves we ought to try to cultivate the certain signs of predestination—such as charity toward the poor, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. These are good signs—signs which give us great consolation; but they are not, after all, so sure, that all occasion of fear is removed from us. But conformity with Jesus Christ is at the same time the most efficacious cause, the surest pledge, and most infallible sign of our predestination; and it is as impossible that a true imitator of Christ should not be predestined, as that our blessed Lord Himself should not be the object of the complacency of His eternal Father.

CHAPTER II

We Correspond with the Designs of the Eternal Father in Sending Us His Son, only by Imitating Him and Laboring Earnestly to Become Like Him.

WHEN Almighty God created intelligent beings in His own likeness, He impressed upon them an obligation, and at the time planted in them a natural inclination to become like His substantial image, the Eternal Word, and to perfect by their actions that divine likeness which was roughly sketched out in their creation. In fact the same inclination which draws intellectual beings —that is to say, angels and men—to make themselves perfect and happy, attracts them likewise to the imitation of the Divine Word, since they would find in that supremely perfect and happy Being their true perfection and their sovereign happiness.

It is true, as St. Bernard says, that all the unhappiness of angels and men has proceeded from their having wished to imitate the Eternal Word, the Son of God, and from their having wished to imitate Him in an impious manner. For the rebel angel, instead of wishing to imitate His goodness and charity, coveted His greatness, and with an insupportable pride and an unheard of temerity, dared to say: *I will be like the Most High* (Isaias, xiv); and God, to confound his pride, cast him down into the depths of hell. Man also, instead of contenting himself

with imitating the sweetness and patience of God, dared to aspire to that universal knowledge of good and evil, which pertained only to the Eternal Word; and God, to punish his presumption, after banishing him from the earthly paradise, condemned him to wander in ignorance and error.

The Divine Word, St. Bernard goes on to say, was touched with compassion for the sorrows of mankind, and resolved to alleviate them. "All the sin and the unhappiness of man proceeds," said he, "from his having desired to imitate me: therefore, to repair an evil of which I have been the innocent cause, that my Father may by me recover that which he has lost through me—I will place myself in a state where man may not only imitate me without danger, but where his happiness and salvation shall consist in imitation of me." And this the Divine Word accomplished in becoming man, in being born in a stable, and in dying on a cross. It was for this especially that the Word was made flesh, so that being made like man, He might give man the inclination, the power, and a facility to render himself similar to God. For Jesus Christ came into this world not only to be our Saviour and Redeemer, but also our model. We might say that He could hardly be our Redeemer and Saviour without being our model; for to be our Redeemer and Saviour, to fulfill all the duties of those divine offices, He must not only deliver us from the pains of hell, which we have merited, and from the power of Satan, but also from the slavery of sin, which rendered us worthy of such punishment, and from the tyranny of our

passions—our pride, our avarice, our ambition, our sensuality, and our anger. Now, He can deliver us from the slavery of sin and the tyranny of our passions only by drawing us to the practice of the virtues which are opposed to those passions, that is, to the practice of humility, of contempt of the world, of mortification, of patience, of meekness, and of detachment from earthly goods. But would He have been able to inspire us with the love of these virtues so contrary to our senses and to our natural inclinations, so far above the lights of human reason; would He have been able to persuade us to practice them if He had not Himself given us the example? For this reason Almighty God, in the ancient law, did not exact of the Jewish people the practice of all these virtues, or at least He did not require them in so high a state of perfection, because the Jews had not then before them the example of a Man God, who alone was capable of rendering the practice of such virtues not only possible but easy.

One of the principal ends, therefore, which the eternal Father proposed to Himself in sending His Son into the world, was to give Him to us as a model; and this too was the especial aim of the Son of God Himself: as He tells us that He is not only the guide whom we ought to follow, but likewise the way in which we must walk, if we wish to find the truth and attain to eternal life: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* For this reason He tells us that He is *the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world* (John, i), and that whosoever followeth Him walketh not in darkness, nor

is in danger of going astray. Therefore He says also: *If any man minister to me, let him follow me* (John, xii). In pursuance of these instructions, we ought to apply to ourselves those words which He spoke after washing the feet of His disciples, and apply them to all our daily actions: *For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also* (John, xiii). If I have been humble, meek, patient; if I have avoided honors; if I have renounced pleasures; if I have embraced the cross; if I have exposed myself to humiliations and reproaches; if I have suffered without taking revenge, nor even complaining of the most frightful inflictions; if I have pardoned my cruel enemies;—it was all for the sake of you: it was to give you an example, and to encourage you to do likewise.

Indeed, our blessed Lord did not perform a single action, from the first to the last moment of His life, which was not done with the intention of redeeming us, and which had not for its object our salvation and the giving us a worthy example of life. We ought, therefore, to suppose that the eternal Father, in proposing His Son as a model to us, says to each of us concerning His life, as He did in the ancient days to Moses concerning the tabernacle and its ornaments: *Look and make it according to the pattern which was shown thee in the Mount* (Exod., xxv).

It is therefore evident that one of the chief ends which the Almighty Father had in view in the mystery of the Incarnation, was to give us a model and a

guide which should be at once visible, so that we might see and follow Him; and infallible, so that we might not, in following Him, be in danger of falling into error: and who must consequently be both God and man. For if He had not been man, we could not have followed Him; and if He had not been God, to follow Him might have been to go astray.

If, then, it be true that we cannot be saved, nor participate in the fruits of the mystery of the Incarnation and the work of redemption, without entering into the designs of the Eternal Father in sending His only-begotten Son into the world to be our Redeemer; and if it be true that one of His principal designs was to give Him to us as a model for our lives: does it not follow, as a necessary consequence, that we cannot hope for salvation, if we do not endeavor continually to imitate Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER III

We Cannot Be True Christians, if We Do Not Try to Make Ourselves Like Jesus Christ.

WE cannot be saved if we are not Christians, and we cannot be true Christians unless we faithfully imitate Jesus Christ, and labor constantly to become like Him. For, rightly speaking, what is a Christian but a disciple of Jesus Christ—that is, one who professes to follow Him? Nobody, says St. Cyprian, may justly be called a Christian but him who imitates Christ in his life to

the best of his abilities. It is told of St. Malachy, that, when some one wished to turn him from an enterprise which he had undertaken for the glory of God, by reason of the dangers attendant upon it, he answered nobly: Do not hinder me from doing my duty to my Master; for I bear the name of Christian in vain, if I am unwilling to follow Jesus Christ. It is to remind us of this obligation which we have contracted as Christians to imitate Christ, that St. Paul tells us that *as many as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.* For this reason we are obliged in Baptism to renounce the devil and his works, the world and its pomps; that all obstacles may be removed which prevent our being united to Jesus Christ.

To be really a Christian it is not enough to possess the name; we must also have the virtue and act out the signification of the name; and we cannot do this otherwise than by following and imitating Christ. Without this we merely bear the name and uniform of Christians, without the reality, or spirit, or truth: we are, in the words of Tertullian, "phantom Christians."

Strictly defined, a Christian is one who takes the Gospel for his rule of conduct, and Jesus Christ for his model: who labors unceasingly to become a living and faithful copy of this divine original, to express in his own person all of His traits of character,—so that, as St. Paul says: *The life of Christ may be made manifest in his mortal flesh* (2 Cor., iv). So that, in seeing him, he might almost think he saw our blessed Lord Himself, and that he might say

with St. Paul: *And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal., ii). This is the portrait of a true Christian. Is it yours, O reader? Do you recognize these characteristics in yourself? Can you answer that you are really a Christian? It is, however, the only standard by which you can measure your own Christianity. Therefore sound your heart, examine your conduct by it, and then answer. One of the first questions which was put to you when you attained the age of reason, and it became necessary to recall to your mind the promises of your baptism, was—"Are you a Christian?" You answered that you were, and you answered then with truth, because you were happily at that age when you had not blotted out the image of Jesus Christ, which was imprinted in your soul by Baptism with the character of Baptism: but could you with truth make the same answer now? If you find in yourself the traits of this divine model,—if you are like our blessed Saviour, you can profess without fear that you are a Christian; but if you find yourself otherwise, you cannot profess your Christian character without belying your words by your conduct.

If we wish to see whether a copy of a picture is faithful or not, whether it gives truly all the expression of the model, we compare the two by looking alternately at the original and the copy. Let us use the *same method* to ascertain whether we are faithful copies of the divine model which has been set before us. But, alas! how will this comparison confound us in showing us, as it inevitably will, that we are very far from possessing any resemblance to

Jesus Christ, and that we are characterized rather by the contrast and entire opposition that we offer to Him. For our blessed Lord was perfectly humble, and He has told us that humility was the principal lesson He wished us to learn of Him: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart:* yet we are vain and proud. He fled from honors and worldly state with horror, as we see by His conduct when the people wished to make Him their king; but we seek those vain honors with avidity. He suffered the most cruel torments, and even the death of the cross, with the most sublime patience; as the Prophet assures us, He opened not His mouth to complain, though He was *led as a lamb to the slaughter:* but how impatient are we—how often carried away by the least evils? He pardoned His cruel enemies, and we cherish resentment for the lightest injuries. He not only loved His enemies and executioners, but prayed for them and died for them: but as for us, we find it hard to love our brethren, and to pardon the trivial offenses they commit against us. He turned away from pleasures, even the most innocent and allowable: we indulge in those that are dangerous and sometimes sinful. He yielded almost nothing to His natural inclinations, although they were most reasonable; but we yield to our inclinations, even though they are irregular. He led a hard, austere, and laborious life; but our highest happiness would seem to consist in a life of ease and the pleasures of the senses. He was born—He lived—He died, poor; His whole life set forth a continual detachment from worldly

goods, and a contempt for them; as He said: *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head* (Matt., viii); but we desire and seek riches, and even commit great injustice, sometimes, to acquire them. He sought His own interests in nothing: we seek ours in everything. He declared that He came not to do His own will—although His will was most holy—but to do the will of His Father, and to carry His obedience even to the death of the cross: but we wish to do our own will, and rebel against the commands of our lawful superiors when they do not accord with our inclinations. Finally, He protested that He did not seek His own glory, but that of His Father; while we, in all our designs and all our actions, only regard our own interests and our own glory.

How few men are there whom this comparison does not fill with confusion! How few who do not recognize in themselves, if they are honest and do not flatter themselves, the difference, or rather, the contrast between them and this divine model, to whom their conduct bears scarcely a single mark of resemblance! How few faithful copies then are there of this divine original! How few true Christians there are, therefore, since it is resemblance to Jesus Christ alone that entitles us to that glorious name; and how few there are walking in the way of salvation, since it is only true Christians who are in that way! To some it appears impossible that the number of the elect should be so small as the Gospel says; to all of us it must be terrible. There-

fore, the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church adduce many reasons to prove to us the truth of those statements; but among all their strongest arguments, there is none more convincing than the observation of the little conformity of life, of manners, of thoughts, and of affections, that exists between the greater part of the Christian world and Jesus Christ, although it is of faith that without this conformity we cannot hope for eternal salvation. But why should we say "little conformity"? Can we imagine a greater contrast than exists between the lives of most Christians and that of our blessed Lord? Indeed, if we wish to know what He did, and what we ought to do, there is no surer method than to take the contrary of what we do at present. Can there be a more unmistakable mark of reprobation than such a contrast as this?

It is greatly to be feared that to many of us the crucifix which will be placed before us at the hour of death, instead of being the source of hope, and confidence, and joy, will be the object of our dread, and perhaps of our despair. It is to be feared that it will be our condemnation when we come to compare ourselves to this divine model, of which, if we wish to be Christians predestined to eternal life, we ought to be copies,—and find how little similarity there is between us and our crucified Lord: when we find how entirely different we are from Him, and thus recognize the too visible mark of our reprobation. For truly, the death of our blessed Saviour will be of no avail to us, if we have not made His life our rule; we cannot profit by His merits, if we

do not profit by His example: and He will not be our Saviour if we have not faithfully made Him our model.

But we can avert this terrible evil. Let us, during our life, make our crucified Saviour the object of our love and imitation, so that in the hour of death He may not be the object of our fear or of our despair. Let us keep our eyes constantly fixed upon this divine original, that we may reproduce in ourselves His every trait. Let us now make Him our model, that He may be our Saviour; and that, after having been similar to Him in this life, we may be like Him in glory.

PART II

Of the Ease with which We May Imitate Jesus Christ; and of the Advantages to be Derived From that Imitation.

ALTHOUGH simple example has great influence over the minds of men, there are four things which render it still more powerful. *First,* the dignity of the person who sets us the example; if he be a prince, or one holding any elevated position in society, we forget at once all the difficulties in the way of following him. *Second,* the relationship which this person bears to us; if he be one who is very near and dear to our heart, we do not find it hard to imitate and follow him. *Third,* the motive which prompts him to give us this example; for if his example is the effect of his love for us, we esteem it a pleasure to follow him. And finally, if, to animate us to the following of his example, he attaches to it rewards of infinite advantage to ourselves; then our interest combines with our reason and our inclination, and gives the example such a charm for us that we are carried away by it with enthusiasm. Now these four things combine to give the example of Jesus Christ power over our hearts and minds, and to give us consequently a great facility in following it.

CHAPTER I

Of the Royal Dignity of Jesus Christ Which Prompts Us to Follow His Example

EXAMPLE has great power over our minds and hearts to incite them to good; over our minds, as it demonstrates clearly to us that we can do good, as others to whom we are equal have done it; and over our hearts, as it persuades us that we ought to do that which others have done, who were under the same obligations as ourselves. But, if example in general has such a power over us, what a new force is given to it if it proceed from a king, or one whom we must all honor! And what a profound impression ought not the example of our blessed Lord to make upon us, since He is truly our King, and the greatest and best of kings!

It is enough to prompt us to imitate Jesus Christ to say that He is our King. Subjects are naturally inclined to imitate their sovereigns, by duty and by a sentiment of self-esteem—that pride so natural to man, which makes us wish to be like kings, who are the sources of glory and greatness, as he thinks that by imitating them he will become great and glorious. So to engage us to imitate Jesus Christ, it must be shown to us that He is truly our King.

Jesus Christ is our true and legitimate King: He declared Himself to be so before Pilate, even in the time of His Passion, when He was urged to answer the accusation of the Jews, who accused Him of

wishing to make Himself king. And Pilate by an admirable disposition of divine Providence, in spite of himself and of the opposition of the Jews, was obliged to bear witness to this truth by the title which he wrote to be fixed upon the cross: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews—*Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judæorum.* For this reason, St. John says that He *hath on his garment and on His thigh written: King of kings, and Lord of lords* (Apoc., xix).

Now royalty may be founded upon three titles—hereditary succession, just conquest, and the free choice of the people: and Jesus Christ is our King by all these three titles.

He is our King by right of birth, inasmuch as He is the Man-God, in virtue of His hypostatic or personal union with God. He is King of heaven and earth, and master of angels and men. For this reason, He says, by the mouth of the royal Psalmist: *I am appointed king by Him over Sion, His holy mountain* (Ps., ii), and declares that *all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth* (Matt., xxviii). This power He had a perfect right to exercise in making Himself King of the universe, but He renounced it out of consideration for our weakness; because, being our model, such a state of grandeur would not accord with our wants: since He came to cure our pride, He ought to appear in that state in which He might most effectually by His example inspire us with a love of humiliation.

He is our King by right of conquest, since, as the Apostle assures us, He *hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and despoiling the princi-*

palities and powers, hath led them confidently in shew, triumphing openly over them in Himself (Col., ii). Therefore, St. Peter calls the Christians a people of conquest; of a conquest, indeed, which ought to be very dear to our blessed Lord since it has cost Him every drop of His precious Blood.

Finally, He is our King by the choice we have made of Him in our Baptism, and by the inviolable fidelity which we then promised to Him in engaging to renounce His enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh,—and to wage against them an endless war, fighting generously to our last breath under the standard of Jesus Christ, our true King. It is to this that we were pledged by those who carried us to the baptismal font; it is this that we have ratified and taken upon ourselves when we attained the age of reason, the first-fruits of which we have consecrated in thus rendering them a homage to our heavenly King. We have then chosen Jesus Christ for our King in Baptism; and we have no occasion to repent of our choice, since we are enlisted in the service of a King equally great and good.

He is great as man, inasmuch as the fullness of the divinity dwelt corporeally in Him, as the Apostle assures us;—inasmuch as He comprised within Himself all created greatness and perfection, whether natural or supernatural, material or spiritual, and was able to harmonize in His own person, those things which appear most difficult to be brought together—majesty with gentleness, modesty with beauty, grandeur with affability, generosity with tenderness, and absolute power with a

wonderful condescension. He was great as man, also, inasmuch as He possessed all virtues, moral and Christian, in an eminent degree, all great qualities, whether supernatural, acquired, or infused, all the most excellent titles, all the treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of God, and finally the fullness of all graces: so that there is not a single one which we possess that did not come from Him. As St. John says: *Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace* (John, i).

He is great as God, inasmuch as He is infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely just, infinitely good, infinitely glorious, infinitely rich, infinitely bountiful, immense, eternal, independent, and (upon which all else depends) infinitely happy, and self-existent. Is He not truly a great King? And ought we to be ashamed to follow Him, or ought we not rather to make it our chief glory to follow Him? *Magna est gloria sequi Dominum.*

But we ought to add that our King is not less good than great; for He does not oppress His subjects by exacting tributes of them as some earthly sovereigns do; He pours out His treasures upon them: He does not despoil them to enrich Himself, but the reverse, as St. Paul says: *Being rich He became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich* (2 Cor., viii). He does not cement the foundations of His throne with the blood of His subjects; on the contrary, He has shed His own blood for them. He does not impose upon His subjects any laws but those most merciful and just ones which He Himself has first submitted to, and has

taught them to observe by the sweet force of His example. He overlooks not the slightest action, not even a cup of water given for love of Him can go without its reward. He recognizes our good desires and good intuitions, and recompenses them whatever may be the success that attends them; and what ought to encourage us most is, that, as His reign, being eternal, will have no end, so likewise His rewards will be eternal. Is He not truly a great and a good King? What an honor and happiness is it to serve such a master! What a shame if we find it difficult to serve Him! And what an unspeakable misfortune is it if we deprive ourselves of the advantages which attend the imitation of Him!

Now when we see men follow their earthly sovereigns to war, although those rulers may possess scarcely one of the noble qualities which we find in our blessed Saviour and true King—although there may be much in their characters which is opposed to that which we love in Him—when we see them for their earthly kings expose their possessions, their comfort, their health, their life, and often their hopes of heaven, although the recompense they hope for is so inconsiderable and uncertain, does it not seem strange that Christians, who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their King, and a King too, as great and good as we have shown Him to be, should find it so hard to follow Him, although by following Him, they may procure such a reward as an eternity of life and rest and joy? Can we imagine a blindness more pitiable, a slothfulness less pardonable? For if a king engaged in war should himself go into the

trenches, if he should expose himself on the open field of battle, there could hardly be found a soldier or officer who would refuse to follow him at such a time. If again he should condescend to perform some office more suitable to a soldier than to a king, as, for example, to labor in the construction of breastworks, however humble that office might be, no prince, no nobleman would think it any disgrace to follow the example of his sovereign. Now, have we who call ourselves Christians any real faith? If we have, how can we account for it, that an earthly monarch, who is, after all, in himself as man, really no better than ourselves—who is only a subject of this great King, our Lord Jesus Christ—who is, compared to Him, only a worm of the earth, and nothingness itself—that such a king should be able to take away the disgrace and hardship of certain acts, and make them easy and glorious of execution, and that Jesus Christ, whom we acknowledge to be our King and our God, should not possess an equal power? Let us beg of our blessed Lord that He will not permit us to be so blind or slothful as to find it shameful or laborious to follow Him in every action of His life, however humble and hard to flesh and blood; but to vouchsafe that, on the contrary, as He has given us the example, we may make it all our happiness and glory to imitate Him.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND JESUS CHRIST OBLIGE US ALIKE TO LOVE AND TO IMITATE HIM.

IF the high dignity of him who sets us an example obviates so thoroughly the difficulties which we should naturally find in following that example, how much more do the relations of tender affection which may exist between persons overcome all such difficulties. For, as sure as we love a person we find no difficulty in imitating him, we have even a natural inclination which prompts us to do so, and to become like him; thus children naturally imitate their parents, and persons who love each other dearly catch, without knowing it, something of the manners of each other; from which fact arises the common maxim that love implies or creates resemblance. Perhaps love springs from sympathy, and this sympathy is nothing but the resemblance that exists between two persons, or at least that sentiment which urges them to acquire such a resemblance. However that may be, it is certain that we not only have no trouble in imitating those who appear to love us, and whom we heartily love, but we have within us a natural inclination to do so.

How can we find it difficult then to imitate our blessed Saviour, who ought to be infinitely dear to us, since He comprises in Himself all the qualities which can render one person amiable in the sight of an-

other? He is our Creator, our Saviour, our Father, our Brother, the Spouse of our souls, our Shepherd, our Physician. How can a creature think it hard to love and imitate his Creator, who drew him from nothingness and made him after His own image? How can he help loving his Saviour, who has delivered him from the greatest evils and crowned him with so many blessings? How can a son withhold his love from the best and most merciful of all fathers? How can a brother resist the inclination to love and imitate that Brother who comes to him, not to share and diminish the inheritance he looks for, but to transfer all His claims to him? How can a bride refuse to love the Spouse who gives her nothing less than an eternal kingdom for her dowry? How can a sheep refrain from following the Shepherd who has conducted it into fertile pastures, and has after all nourished it with His own flesh and blood? And, lastly, how can a sick man help loving, and trusting himself to the care of the Physician who delivers him from death, and bestows on him eternal life, making His own Blood the remedy of all ills? And how can we hold back from loving and imitating Jesus Christ, who bears all these various relations to us, who fulfills all their duties so perfectly, and who says to us so kindly: *If any man minister to me, let him follow me* (John, xii). How can we dispense ourselves from loving Him who has wished to be on terms of such tender affection with us? And can it be hard to follow Him, if we really love Him? Is not the difficulty that we experience in imitating Him a convincing proof that

we do not heartily love Him? His love for us prompted Him to become like us, although it cost Him so dear—although He was obliged to abase Himself so low, to be despoiled of His majesty and glory, and to be clothed again with weakness and misery. And does not the love which we ought to have for Him oblige us to labor to become like Him, although by so doing, instead of abasing ourselves, we shall procure every possible advantage, and shall enter into the participation of all His greatness and glory, and shall find therein both our glory and happiness? How can we answer reasons so strong and reproaches so just, except by an humble avowal of our unrighteousness and ingratitude, by our confusion and sorrow at such conduct, and by a resolution most firm and sincere, to make amends for it, and to spare no effort to attach ourselves to Jesus Christ, and to follow Him with such constancy that nothing shall ever turn us aside from the path He has trodden for us?

But let us not forget, O Lord and Saviour, that all our efforts will be unavailing, if Thou dost not assist them; and all the bright examples of Thy virtues will strike our eyes in vain, if Thy grace is wanting to animate and sustain us in following Thee.

CHAPTER III

THE LOVE WHICH PROMPTS OUR LORD TO GIVE US HIS EXAMPLE IS A POWERFUL MOTIVE TO INCITE US TO IMITATE IT.

IF the dignity of Jesus Christ and His character as a King ought to obviate the difficulties we find in following and imitating Him; if the loving relations which He has wished to have with us, ought to make it easy for us to imitate His example, the goodness which He has manifested in giving us His example only by an effect of His sincere and tender love for us, ought to make it grateful and pleasant to us to follow Him. It is our blessed Lord's love alone which has prompted Him to give us such splendid examples of humility, of patience, of mortification, of poverty, and of obedience: it is His love alone which made Him embrace suffering, humiliation, and the cross: for none of those things was necessary to Him: there was not one of them which was not unsuited to Him. They were the remedies for the disorders of our souls; He was exempt from all infirmities, and needed not such remedies. They were the punishments due to our transgressions; He was free from all sin, and therefore had not merited those pains. They were preservatives against sin; but He was not liable to sin, and therefore they are useless to Him.

Riches, honor, and pleasures were created for Him, and naturally He ought to have been born, and to

have lived, in happiness and glory. But we are infirm and sick unto death, and need remedies; we are guilty, and merit punishment: we are feeble, and led by our corrupt nature into every evil, and we require powerful preservatives to strengthen us and defend us against our impending evils. Yet sick and miserable as we are, we have not the courage to take the remedies presented to us. We draw back from the salutary draught because it appears too bitter. Worthy of punishment as we are, we shrink from submitting to the pains we have merited, because they seem too severe. Feeble as we are, we cannot resolve to shun the evils to which our corrupt inclinations lead us, by using these certain preservatives, because they are not made agreeable to our delicate sensibilities. But what has been done by Jesus Christ, our Saviour and model? Although He knew not sickness or infirmity, He condescended to take the remedies we so much need, that He might take from them all their bitterness, or at least abate our unwillingness to take them, by the power of His example. Although He was innocent—although He was holiness itself—He submitted to the severest punishment that was ever inflicted on the greatest criminals, in order that He might teach us to receive in a proper spirit the light punishment which God's mercy rather than His justice imposes upon us in place of the eternal pains which we have justly merited. Finally, although He was not liable to sin, He deigned to use the preservatives against it which were not only useless to Him but unworthy of Him, that He might incite us, who need them so

much, to use them against our weakness and corruption.

Our blessed Lord has used these remedies very much after the manner of a kind mother, who, seeing that her child lacks courage to take a necessary medicine because it seems too bitter—tastes it first, although she needs it not. Thus, the chalice of humiliation and suffering is needful to us; but we in our delicacy and slothfulness cannot resolve to drink of it, and its bitterness repels, more than our sense of our own need attracts us. Now, our blessed Saviour, although He needed not this chalice, and it was all unworthy of Him, has given us an example by draining it to the very dregs, and in drinking of it first He has taken away all its bitterness; or if any should perchance remain, the love we ought to have for Him will sweeten it. Is it not wonderful that our blessed Lord's love for us should have made Him embrace suffering and humiliation and the cross, though He needed them not—though they were not suited to Him—and though His personal union with God and the beatific vision rendered Him incapable of them except by the operation of a continual miracle? And is it not strange, that while the love of Jesus Christ for us has prompted Him to do all this—our love for Him does not engage us to follow Him, to imitate His example, to become like Him, to embrace, if not with joy, at least courageously, crosses, suffering, and humiliations, not only useful, but absolutely necessary to us.

It must be acknowledged that when we look at the cross by itself, our nature gives way to alarm, our

senses shrink from it, our reason itself revolts against it. But when we reflect that our blessed Lord has borne the cross before us, that He bore it for our sake, that we shall bear it after Him and for love of Him—if we are at all touched by His love, then nature, our senses, and our reason cease to make resistance and begin to find a certain charm in that which had before excited only horror. It is this thought which has animated and sustained the greatest saints in their sufferings; it was this which made St. Andrew yearn for the cross with the ardor of a lover ["O blessed cross, who hast received comeliness from the members of my Lord—long desired, ardently loved, unceasingly sought for and now prepared for my longing soul; receive me from men and restore me to my Master, that He who redeemed me by thee may through thee receive me"]. It was this which made St. Ignatius Loyola say that a man who was touched with the love of Jesus Christ and animated by His spirit would wish for crosses and humiliations more earnestly than worldlings long for pleasures and honors, because the former would put them into a state of conformity with Jesus Christ. It was this which prompted St. Francis Xavier to declare that a life without crosses was the severest of all crosses to one who sincerely loved his Lord; and St. Theresa to say that often in her impatience to see and possess God, nothing rendered life supportable to her but the happiness she found in suffering something for Him who suffered so much for her, and in trying to become like Him. These are the thoughts and feelings of those who

love Jesus Christ; and when our thoughts and feelings are different from these, we either love Him very little or not at all.

We ought to make use of these thoughts to encourage and excite ourselves to embrace, or at least to accept without murmuring, the humiliations and sufferings that may be laid upon us. To this good end each of us ought to say: "What! can it be that my Saviour's love for me has made Him give me such great examples of humility and mortification, although such things were not intended for Him, because they were necessary for me; and the love which I ought to have for Him, the gratitude which His admirable condescension deserves from me, are not capable of obliging me to imitate His virtues, which are the effects of His love for me, and which are indispensably needful for my salvation!"

We read in the life of St. Wenceslas, Duke of Bohemia, that when he was going one winter night to visit a church at some distance from his palace, walking with bare feet through the snow, an officer of his household who accompanied him was overcome by the severe cold, and sank down saying that he could go no farther. The fervent and generous prince turned to him and said: "Walk in the footprints which I have made in the snow and you will find no difficulty in following me." The officer did as he was bidden, and, as by a miracle, the natural warmth and vigor of the body returned to him, and he was able to follow his master without difficulty. We, too, when the chills of slothfulness or indifference creep over us and paralyze our hearts so that we

feel as if we could no longer walk in the narrow way, have only to reflect that it is in the footsteps of our blessed Lord that we must tread, and that they are marked by His love: this thought alone will banish all our coldness and give us the fervor and strength we need to follow Him.

CHAPTER IV

The Advantages Which Jesus Christ Offers Us, Engage Us to Follow Him

TO appreciate the force of this motive, and to enter into the idea of St. Ignatius, we must recall to mind a species of parable of which he makes use in his book of Spiritual Exercises, to animate Christians to the following of Christ. Represent to yourself, therefore, a wise, brave, generous, rich, and happy king, who, moved by a just desire to beat down the pride of his enemies, to repel their injustice and violence, and to protect his subjects against their invasions, assembles all his people who are capable of assisting in his designs, and invites them to engage in that just war. To animate them with the spirit of his cause, he annexes to it certain conditions—conditions not only most just and easy of fulfillment, but also most advantageous to them. The first is that he wishes none of his subjects to fare worse than himself; but, on the contrary, he prefers to give up the easier lot to them and take the harder for himself. The second is that he does not ex-

pect them to go into battle on any occasion whatever, unless they see him marching at their head. The third is that he offers to pay all the costs of the war, and only asks of them their persons and a little courage and good will. The fourth is that he makes himself answerable for the entire success of the combat, provided they are willing to fight according to the best of their ability. The fifth and last is that, reserving to himself the glory of the victory alone, he gives up to them all its fruits and advantages, promising to each of his soldiers, rewards which surpass not only his efforts but his greatest desires. Now, is there any one who would refuse to follow an earthly king on such conditions as these? Ought not a person who could not be moved by such offers to be set down as not merely the most slothful, but likewise the most foolish of men? Alas! kings find followers enough every day on terms far different from these: the loss of property and of health, exposure of life, and, not seldom, the only recompense a violent death. And if their followers are faithful through such trials, what would they not do if the conditions of their service were at all like those which we have enumerated above? Those are the conditions which our blessed Saviour, our true King, proposes to us to tempt us to enlist in His service.

To understand and enter fully into the spirit of the illustration St. Ignatius makes use of, we must be fully persuaded that Jesus Christ is this King, so bountiful, so amiable, and so perfect, who came to earth from heaven to make war against His enemies and ours: that is, the devil and the world;

and to establish upon their ruins the glory of His Father, whom they have so wantonly outraged. This great King invites us to follow Him in an enterprise so just, and holy, and glorious, and proposes to us the conditions we have observed in the parable.

First. Our blessed Lord not only does not wish that those who follow Him should have a harder fare than Himself, but taking the severest and rudest portion for Himself, He leaves them the lightest and pleasantest. For if we consider the life of the most austere hermit, howsoever abject and severe it may be, it will still bear no comparison with the life of our blessed Saviour. For what is his poverty compared to that of Jesus Christ in the manger and on the cross? What is the hermit's abjectness by the side of the humiliations of the hidden life of our Lord and the ignominy of His Passion? Do his austerities equal the penance of Jesus Christ during His forty days in the wilderness, and the fatigues of His apostolic life, joined to the neediness which he must necessarily suffer who has no money for his subsistence, and no place to repose his wearied frame? Our blessed Lord Himself tells us that: *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the son of man hath not where to lay his head* (Matt., viii).

Secondly. Jesus Christ does not expect His soldiers to enter into any action in which He does not command and take the lead in person. He asks of us no act of virtue, the example of which He has not set in a matter more difficult. He invites us to bear the cross after Him, to deny ourselves, to do

violence to our own wills, to suffer with patience, to humiliate ourselves, to forgive injuries, and to love our enemies. Has He not given us heroic examples of all these virtues, and that too in matters incomparably harder than any that can ever fall to our lot? Can any cross that He will impose upon us be as burthensome as His own? If He invites us to deny ourselves—to renounce our disorderly inclinations, does He exact too much of us in asking us to do violence to ourselves that we may resist our evil passions, when He resisted His just and holy inclinations even to the sweat of blood? Shall we ever have occasion to practice patience such as He exercised during His Passion? And what, after all, are the humiliations to which He wishes us to subject ourselves, compared to the humiliations and ignominy of His cross? If He exhorts to forgive injuries, however great they may be, can they equal those which He forgave? However unjust our enemies may be, can we refuse to love them, after having seen our blessed Saviour love His murderers, and pray for them in His dying hour? In very truth, we shall find that our Lord exacts nothing of us, of which He has not previously given us an example, in things more difficult than any that can befall us.

Thirdly. Unlike earthly kings who tax their subjects for the expenses of the war in which they engage, our heavenly King and Saviour pays all the cost of the spiritual contest to which He invites us: for He freely gives us His grace, without which we should be powerless, but with which we are equal to any force that may be brought against us. He has

promised us His grace, and if we are faithful we need not fear that He will not keep His word. All that He asks is the will on our part to correspond to His grace; and He contributes much even to this will, since we could not have even that if we had not the assistance of His grace; He requires only our consent and fidelity to His graces which He multiplies in us in proportion to our faithfulness.

Fourthly. Our blessed Lord grants us the victory in this war, provided only that we have the will to fight. In wars carried on under the lead of earthly sovereigns, however brave a soldier may be, however valiantly he may have fought, he not seldom is vanquished and left to perish on the field; but in this spiritual combat, it is necessary only to fight and resist, to be victorious; for so long as one fights or resists he is not overcome; and he who is not overcome is a victor. However redoubtable may be our foes, they cannot overcome our hearts by violence; for we are invincible as long as we do not wish to be conquered. Thus the weakest man in the world, as St. Antony says, fortified by the sign of the cross, and a sincere trust in God, and upheld by God's grace, may safely confront and overcome all the powers of hell. We are never vanquished so long as we combat; but we must really combat the enemy, and not pretend to overcome him without fighting or to triumph without having overcome him; though many, through a spirit of slothfulness, as contemptible as it is wicked, seem to desire to do so.

Finally. Jesus Christ promises us as the reward

of our efforts—as the fruit of our victory—a kingdom: and what a kingdom! A kingdom which shall have no end: an eternal kingdom in which He shall reign over us for ever, and we shall be sharers in all His happiness and glory. How can we dare to refuse to follow our heavenly King on such conditions as these? Can we do so without being false to our own best interests, without covering ourselves with shame, and passing, at the same time, for the most slothful, ungrateful, and foolish of all creatures? But, O my Saviour, Thou wilt try in vain to draw us to Thy service by these favorable conditions, if at the time Thou proposest them to our minds, Thou dost not attract our hearts towards Thee by the sweet force of Thy grace.

Book the Second

OF THE PRACTICE OF THE IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST

HAVING shown, in the first book, the necessity under which we are to imitate our divine Saviour, and the advantages which flow from imitation of Him, we must now show how this imitation of Him may be most effectually practiced. For it would profit us little to know our obligations, if this knowledge did not prompt us to fulfill them; and the consideration of the advantages to be obtained from the faithful following of Jesus Christ, if it did not impel us to labor to procure those advantages, would not only be useless to us, but would do us great harm, inasmuch as it would render us more inexcusable before God, for neglecting to practice that of which we saw the necessity and knew the beneficial effect. Therefore this second book will be devoted to the consideration of the practice of the imitation of Jesus Christ; and we shall endeavor to set forth herein two things: *first,* the dispositions which we must have to insure success in our design of imitating Him; *second,* the different degrees of this imitation, and the method to be followed in it.

PART I

Of the Dispositions Necessary to Success in the Imitation of Jesus Christ

IT would be difficult to conceive of a person having thoroughly comprehended the reasons adduced in our first book why we ought to imitate Jesus Christ, without being thereby persuaded that it is his duty to do so: and it would also be difficult to imagine one who is thoroughly persuaded of this duty, without being at the same time touched by a sincere and efficacious desire to apply himself to this imitation without delay. Therefore, it is proper that we should now set forth the dispositions which we must have if we would succeed in this holy purpose. These dispositions may be reduced to two: knowledge and love. So we must, in the first place, endeavor to acquire a perfect knowledge of all that regards the person and life of our Saviour; and in the second place, make every effort to acquire a perfect love of Him.

CHAPTER I

Of the First Disposition Necessary to Success in the Imitation of Jesus Christ: viz.: the Acquirement of a Perfect and Exact Knowledge of All that Concerns His Person and Life.

HE who is touched with a sincere desire to imitate our blessed Lord—to make himself a perfect copy of that divine model—ought to commence his work by trying to obtain a perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ: not a confused, general, dry knowledge of Him, but a knowledge at once clear, distinct, and hearty. This is what St. Paul called knowing Christ, when he said that he judged himself *not to know anything but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified* (1 Cor., ii); and he wished that this knowledge should be the principal desire and study of Christians. It was this knowledge which he prayed for in behalf of his disciples: *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your hearts being enlightened, that you may know what the hope is of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints* (Ephes., i); and that Christ might *dwell by faith in all their hearts.* But to know Jesus Christ, it is indispensably necessary to study Him: it is impossible to become a master in this divine science without first being a disciple. St. Paul conveys this idea in

exhorting the Ephesians to avoid the offenses of the Gentiles, when he says: *But you have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard Him and have been taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus* (Ephes., iv); and also when he counsels the faithful to keep Jesus Christ ever before their eyes as the *author and finisher of faith.* To study Christ, we must make Him the great object of our thoughts and meditations, according to the counsel of the blessed author of the Imitation of Christ: *our chief study must be to meditate continually on the life of Christ.* And we must study Him with care, with zeal, and with constancy.

This divine knowledge can be drawn from the frequent and careful reading of the holy Gospels, especially that of St. John, and of the Epistles of St. Paul. From these we may learn Jesus Christ and obtain His spirit. And we must particularly observe in them four things, that we may meditate upon them at our leisure: I. The teaching and maxims of Jesus Christ and our meditation upon them must not be superficial, dry, and speculative, but penetrating, practical, and fervent, so that we shall comprehend His truths and receive them into our hearts. II. We must observe in each mystery two things—its exterior and interior, its body and soul. Its body, or exterior, comprises the action which passes in it, its circumstances of time, place, and persons who are engaged in it. Its soul, or interior, includes that which passes in the heart and mind of our blessed Lord—His thoughts and intentions, His affections, and the virtues which He prac-

tices in it; and it is to this interior of the mystery that we must devote ourselves most sedulously. III. We must meditate attentively on all the actions of our Lord reported in the Gospels, and reflect on all their circumstances, as there is not a single one which was not intended for our edification, instruction, and example, and persuade ourselves (as indeed is true) that our blessed Lord in performing this or that action intended to set it up as an example for us, at the same time that by it He merited for us the graces necessary to imitate it. IV. We must especially note the virtues of Jesus Christ which shine so resplendently everywhere in the Gospels, and make them the subject of our daily meditations, since it is those which properly make up the spirit and interior of Jesus Christ. To this end it would be well to remark and collect the chief examples of each virtue which are found dispersed through the Gospels, which we shall do in our third book in treating of the virtues of our blessed Lord. The knowledge of Jesus Christ, therefore, may be reduced to three or four methods by which we may obtain it, so as to be capable of imitating Him.

But, to attain this end, it is not sufficient to read or meditate in a light and superficial manner, and only for some days or months, but we must make it our ordinary occupation (at least some part of the day) during many years, or rather during our whole life. We must follow the example of St. Francis Xavier, who went through, in his meditations every month, the abridgment of the life of our blessed Lord, as it is found in the Spiritual Exercises

of St. Ignatius, so that by this attentive and continual meditation, we may form a clear and definite idea of the person, the virtues, the maxims, the mysteries, and actions of Jesus Christ; an idea which shall make Him in a manner always present to us, especially when we are laboring to model our own conduct after His admirable rules. It may be that He will thus be present to us by remembrance alone, which, when we have an action to perform, will represent to us how He would have acted under similar circumstances, or will remind us of some shining example given by Him: or, perhaps it may be, that we shall be taught how we ought to act by the elevation of mind and soul to heaven, where He dwells, and from where He sees and assists us: or, it may be, that we shall regard Him as effectually present in us when He is sacramentally present after communion, or when even he is no longer present but in the effects He produces—a moral and indescribable presence, as the source of many good aspirations and works which are the consequences of a good communion, according to the promise of our Lord Himself, that whoever shall eat His flesh and drink His blood, shall dwell in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ in him—a promise which denotes not a transient but a permanent presence. Or finally, it may be that we shall accustom ourselves to regard Him as present in us independently of the Communion by the constant enlightenment that we receive from Him by the graces which He produces in us, in the same manner that the sun is considered present in all places into which its beams penetrate.

CHAPTER II

OF THE SECOND DISPOSITION NECESSARY TO SUCCESS IN THE IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST, VIZ., THE OBTAINING OF A TRUE LOVE OF HIM.

WE cannot love Jesus Christ without knowing Him, and we cannot know Him without loving Him: so too we can hardly imitate Him if we do not love Him, nor can we love Him truly without being moved by a strong desire to imitate Him. The principal effect which the love of Jesus Christ produces in a heart sincerely touched by it, is a fervent desire to imitate Him, and to make itself perfectly like Him. There are three kinds of love which we can have for our blessed Saviour: *first,* a high esteem, a reasonable love, founded on His perfections; *second,* a peculiar tenderness, a true sentiment of affection; and *third,* a love based on interest. Now all of these three kinds of love prompt us in different ways to labor to become similar to Jesus Christ.

First. As to our rational love for our blessed Saviour: as it springs from our esteem of His sacred person, from our high conception of His greatness and perfections,—our natural passion for glory, and the desire of the heart for excellence and perfection, ought to impel us to make ourselves like Him who is the source of all grandeur and glory, since that is the most infallible means of becoming great and glorious, and of making ourselves perfect.

Secondly. As to our tender affection: it is undeniable that its first and greatest effect upon us is to unite us as closely as possible in heart and mind with those whom we love;—and in what does this union of hearts consist, if not in a similarity of manners, of thoughts, and of affections?

When we love a person tenderly, we desire nothing with more ardor than to convince that person of our love: we esteem nothing hard which tends to this end: the most difficult and disagreeable things become easy and pleasant to us, when we act from this motive. Now there is no stronger and more convincing proof of love for any person, than the manifestation of a desire and effort to imitate him in all things, and to neglect nothing which can make one perfectly like him. Actuated by this sentiment, the glorious martyr, St. Ignatius, said: "Let them cast me upon burning coals,—let them expose me to the fury of beasts of prey,—let them break my bones and tear me limb from limb,—let Satan employ all his torments to break me down;—it will all be sweet and grateful to me, if it serves to unite me to Jesus Christ—if it makes me resemble more closely my crucified Saviour!" We find the same sentiment in the Canticle of Canticles, where the spouse demands of his bride, as the invincible proof of her affection, that she should imprint his image ineffaceably upon her heart: *Put me as a seal upon thy heart* (Cant., viii).

Thirdly and finally. The love which is based on interest prompts us to labor unceasingly to imitate Jesus Christ, since only by so doing can we acquire

that perfect conformity of heart and mind with Him in which we shall find our own glory, happiness, and perfection in this life, and the sure pledge of our predestination in the future. So true is it that it is necessary only to have a love for Jesus Christ to be animated with a sincere desire to imitate Him! And we shall see that all the saints who have been distinguished for their love of Jesus Christ have labored with incredible zeal to imitate Him, to portray in themselves all the traits of this divine original, and become perfect copies of Him. Who ever loved our blessed Saviour more ardently than St. Paul—and who ever labored harder to imitate Him? He protested that he lived not of his own life, but of the life of his Saviour: *And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal., ii). He felt it an honor to bear in his body the marks of his Saviour, and to become the image of Christ crucified;—and, with all his modesty, he did not hesitate to propose himself as a model to the Corinthians, and exhort them to be imitators of him even as he was an imitator of Jesus Christ. Who ever loved our blessed Lord more tenderly than that earthly seraph, St. Francis? And who ever yearned more sincerely to be united to Him by a perfect conformity of body and mind and heart? It was in compliance with this holy desire that Jesus Christ, by a great miracle, deigned to imprint the sacred stigmata in the hands and feet and side of this zealous lover of the cross, and to make him a perfect living copy of Himself. And St. Ignatius Loyola witnessed his tender and ardent love for the person of Jesus Christ in giving His

sacred name to the company which he founded, so as to keep his children constantly reminded that they were to be entirely devoted to the love of their crucified Lord. And who ever surpassed St. Ignatius in zeal in drawing men to the imitation of Jesus Christ? All his constitutions are nothing but an expression of the life, maxims, examples, and spirit of our Lord, to whom he had so ardent a passion to make himself similar.

He, therefore, who is touched with the desire to imitate Christ, must begin by striving to acquire a sincere and deep love of Him: for, as bronze, however hard it may be, softens and runs and becomes capable of being formed into any shape whatever when it is put into the fire, so, too, our hearts, no matter how hard and intractable they are, as soon as they begin to be inflamed with that divine fire which Jesus Christ came to kindle upon earth, soften and possess not merely the capability but a strong inclination to be molded into the image of Him, and to acquire a perfect conformity with Him.

And now, to acquire this love, two things are necessary: I. To meditate frequently on the motives by which we are impelled towards it. II. To use the means which can aid us in acquiring it. *First.* The motives most capable of exciting us to this love, are: *first,* the grandeur and perfections of Jesus Christ; *second,* the infinite love which He has for us, and the ardent longing that He has to receive our love; *third,* the benefits which He has poured out upon us, benefits innumerable, continual, and infinite; *fourth,* the unspeakable tortures which He suffered for us,

and the death of the cross to which He submitted for love of us; *fifth,* the loving relations in which He stands to us, as our Saviour, our Master, our Shepherd, our Father, our Brother, our Spouse; and *finally,* the infinite advantages to be gained by loving Him, since our perfection, repose, glory, and happiness for time and eternity are to be found in His love.

Secondly. We must use the proper means to aid us in acquiring this love, such as, *first,* to beg it of Him often in prayer; *second,* to seek the intercession of those saints who have loved our Saviour most ardently, and pray that they will obtain it for us; *third,* to draw near, frequently, to that furnace of divine love, the sacred Communion; *fourth,* to think often of Jesus Christ, and to speak of Him with those who are distinguished for love of Him; *fifth,* to make use of ejaculatory prayers or aspirations of the love of Christ; and *finally,* to read the books in which this love is treated of, and to read them attentively and devoutly.

PART II

Of the Manner of Imitating Jesus Christ, the Different Degrees of this Imitation, and the Order to be Observed Therein.

THE sacred Scripture, in setting forth the eternal Wisdom, the Incarnate Word, as the model for our imitation, bestows upon Him four names, which denote clearly the manner in which we ought to imitate Him, the different degrees or steps by which we may advance to the perfection of this imitation, and also in what things we ought especially to imitate Him. *First.* The Incarnate Word is called in Holy Scripture *the brightness of eternal light and the unspotted mirror of God's eternal majesty* (Wisd., vii). *Secondly.* He is called *our model;* for it was our blessed Lord who was designated in the model which God set before Moses, and from which He counseled him never to turn his eyes: *Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount* (Exod., xxv). Now what can this model be which we are to keep ever before us, if not Jesus Christ? And what is this mount upon which the great exemplar is set up for us, if not Calvary, to show us that it is our *crucified* Lord especially whom we are bound to imitate? *Thirdly.* He is called our *rule:* and it was

to this rule that St. Paul referred, when, in writing to the Corinthians, he speaks of *glorying according to the measure of the rule which God hath measured unto us* (2 Cor., x). And in his epistle to the Galatians he likewise says: *Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy* (Gal., vi). Lastly, Holy Scripture calls the Incarnate Word a *seal: Put me,* says the spouse in the Canticle, *as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm* (Cant., viii). These four titles teach us at one and the same time what we ought to imitate in Jesus Christ, and by what steps we may attain to this perfect conformity of heart and mind with Him who is the object of this imitation.

CHAPTER I

That Jesus Christ is Our Mirror: Being the First Step in the Imitation of Christ

HOLY SCRIPTURE calls the Incarnate Word an unspotted mirror: *Speculum sine macula.* It is the office of a mirror to make known to us our own defects, and by so doing to inspire us with a desire to remedy them, and to place it within our power to do so. This is the first effect which the sight of Jesus Christ ought to produce in us, and a perfect knowledge of His virtues will reveal to us our deformity, and will make us see ourselves and all our vices and failings more clearly by the contrast which they offer to the virtues which shine so resplendently in this *unspotted mirror of God's*

majesty. This view of our Lord will impress us with a sentiment of horror for these faults and vices, and will inspire us with a sincere desire to blot out all the stains which are a hindrance to the conformity which we ought to have with the spotlessness of Jesus Christ.

We must, therefore, begin our imitation of our blessed Lord by applying ourselves seriously to the correction of the vices which hinder our resemblance to Him. And what are these vices but our own inordinate self-love, our pride, ambition, sensuality, selfishness, excessive attachment to earthly goods, our anger, and our revengefulness! This is what St. Paul calls *stripping* one's self *of the old man with his deeds,* which he teaches us is a necessary disposition for *putting on the new man:* that is, becoming similar to Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells how to commence this great work, when he says: *Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.* And he enumerates these works of darkness in the subsequent verse, that there may be no mistake about his meaning: *Let us therefore walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy* (Rom., xiii), and then adds the counsel—*put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* This, therefore, ought to be the occupation of those who are beginning,—who are still in what is appropriately called the purgative way—who are laboring to root out the vices, to overthrow the obstacles, which stand between them and that conformity with Jesus Christ, to which, notwithstand-

ing all their imperfections, they ought unceasingly to aspire.

Therefore, as vain worldlings who are entirely carried away by their desire to please are constantly before the mirror to consult it for the observation and correction of anything that may be out of order in their personal appearance, so, too, those who are touched with a sincere wish to please God ought to fix their eyes upon the crucifix as upon an admirable mirror, which, rightly used, will show them their every fault, and will touch them with reproach at the same time that it inspires them with a desire to correct those faults. That sacred Body, weakened by suffering, and covered with wounds, will reproach them for their love of pleasure, their delicacy and sensuality. The opprobrium and ignominy suffered by our divine Saviour, and the state of annihilation to which He was almost reduced, will show them the sinfulness of their pride, their ambition, and attachment to the honors and praises of the world. That unexampled poverty, that nakedness of a God dying on the cross, will reproach them with their avarice and inordinate attachment to worldly goods and to the comforts of life. The heroic patience with which Jesus Christ suffered those frightful tortures will astonish them, as they compare it with their own extreme sensitiveness under the lightest evils. The willingness with which He pardoned His enemies and cruel executioners, praying and dying at the same time for them—will show them the iniquity of their dislikes and hatreds, and of their reluctance to forgive even imaginary

injuries. These are some of the effects which may be wrought in us by the sight of that admirable mirror, Jesus crucified, if we keep it before our eyes and meditate frequently upon it.

It ought therefore to be a very common occupation of those who are entering upon the way of perfection, and who wish earnestly to advance therein, to cast their eyes frequently on the crucifix, as upon a living mirror of all virtues, which will show them the contrast between itself and them, and inspire them with horror for their own shortcomings, at the same time that it fills them with a longing for better things—for the virtues which shine from it, by which they may become like their crucified Lord. Those directors of souls who use this method with those who are beginning their spiritual life abridge wonderfully the path of perfection: for the contrast of our vices with the virtues of our blessed Saviour is the most powerful of all motives to draw us to a knowledge and love of Him. This was the method used by St. Paul when he exhorted the faithful to look constantly *on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame* (Heb., xii).

CHAPTER II

That Jesus Christ Is Our Model: Being the Second Step in the Imitation of Jesus Christ

JESUS CHRIST is called in Scripture not only a mirror to make known our defects to us, but a model upon which we ought to form ourselves,—a perfect original which we ought to keep ever before us in order to become complete copies of it, in which every trait should be faithfully reproduced. And we must commence at first by the exterior of our blessed Lord, by that which presents itself to our senses,—to regulate our senses, our faculties, and all that relates to our bodies, by reference to His manner of regulating all similar things in His own person. For the eternal Father, in setting His Son before us in a visible and sensible presence, says to us as He did to Moses in speaking of the tabernacle, which was, as St. Paul explains, the figure of Jesus Christ: *Look and make it according to the pattern that was shewn thee in the mount.* This is the second step in the imitation of Jesus Christ.

It was for this, says St. Basil, that God deigned to take upon Himself our nature, and to become man, that He might depict in Himself, as in a picture, the beauty of true virtue, and set it before mankind as the archetype upon which they might use all their efforts. Almighty God wished to take away all excuses for not satisfying the obligation which rests

upon man to imitate His virtues and perfections. He did not wish man to be able to say that, being a creature of a gross and material nature, unable to know anything save through the medium of his senses, it was impossible for him to imitate the virtues of God, who is an invisible being and pure spirit. So He set forth His perfections in His own sacred humanity in the brightest colors as in a picture, and placed it before our eyes, commanding us to reproduce them in ourselves. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that each of us is the painter of his own life, the will being the hand by which every mark of the pencil is made, the virtues being the colors we must use, and Jesus Christ being our model.

We must, therefore, like a painter who wishes to make a faithful copy of a fine original, turn our eyes to our model at almost every stroke of the brush that we may catch the expression of every feature: we must keep His virtues ever before us, that we may make all our senses and powers conform to His: so that our sight may be pure, simple, and modest, like His; our ears, like His, closed to all vanity and flattery, as well as to things contrary to modesty and purity and charity; that our mouth may be like His, never opened but to edify our neighbor, to instruct the ignorant, or to console the afflicted; that our hands like His may be employed only in doing good to our fellow-men, and in works of justice and mercy; that every movement of our senses and of our bodies may be governed like His by the rules of modesty; that all our appetites may be subject to our reason; and that all our bodily

powers may be perfectly under the control of our mind. This is what St. Paul calls *always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies* (2 Cor., iv). In this way we become living and faithful copies of this divine original, so that the sight of us may remind beholders in some manner of our crucified Lord. Such was St. Bernard, of whom it is said that his exterior was composed and serene, so that his interior virtues shone upon his countenance and gave him the look of Jesus Christ conversing with men. Such was the great St. Francis of Sales, of whom the celebrated Cardinal de Bérulle, the founder of the French Oratory, said that when he wished to form an idea of how our blessed Lord looked while He dwelt among men, he had only to look at the holy Bishop of Geneva, whose whole exterior and every action seemed to represent the manners and virtues of Jesus Christ, and who seemed to breathe around him an air of holiness, which inspired all with whom he came in contact with veneration for him, with love for virtue and a desire to practice it.

Vouchsafe, therefore, O my Lord and Saviour, that I may keep the eyes of my mind and heart ever fixed upon Thy divine Person, and labor without ceasing to become like unto Thee; so that every action which I perform may help to perfect Thy image in me. But alas! O Lord, all my efforts will be vain if Thou dost not Thyself grave this image in my heart from where it may govern my body, its senses, powers, and all its operations; for I am distracted by so

many frivolous occupations, I am led astray by attachment to so many vain objects and creatures, that my eyes and mind are often drawn away from Thee, and I am hindered from occupying myself solely with the thought of Thee and laboring only to become like Thee.

CHAPTER III

That Jesus Christ Is Our Rule: Being the Third Step in the Imitation of Jesus Christ

JESUS CHRIST is our rule, as the Apostle teaches, and He is a true, just, and infallible rule by which we ought to measure our conduct, if we wish it to be true, just, and perfect. And, as we may truly say that the whole life of our blessed Saviour is the general and universal rule for our life, so, too, we may say that every action of His life may be imitated in the actions of our own. The great St. Basil says that every action of Jesus Christ is an example and a rule of piety and virtue which we are bound to obey. It would be great folly for an architect to content himself with making a general plan of a building which he had undertaken, without proceeding to the working plans in which every stone and timber is measured and has its proper place assigned, and by which the workmen must adjust all their labors;—and it is no less foolish for us to content ourselves with making our Lord the general rule of our life, without measuring every one of our actions by Him. It is in this neces-

sity of regulating our actions by those of Jesus Christ that the third step in the imitation of Him consists.

To understand perfectly what are our engagements in this stage of the imitation of Christ, we must bear in mind that our life is composed of three sorts of actions. The first are natural and indifferent actions, such as eating and drinking, and the taking of innocent recreation for the relaxation of body and mind. The second are those which concern society, whether civil or Christian, and our duties towards those with whom we live or come in contact, as honest intercourse, social conversation, kindly offices, and also works of charity towards the needy. The third include acts of devotion, and all our duties towards God, as prayer, sacrifice, communion, and penance. Now Jesus Christ, as our model, performed all these actions, and it is by His performance of these duties that we must measure our own and accustom ourselves to it, so that when we are about to perform any action we shall first look at His performance of the same, and so be led to strive to make ours conformable to it.

First. To commence with our natural and indifferent actions: we must, when we would eat or drink, or sleep, or take innocent recreation, turn to Jesus Christ, and observe His manner of doing these things, and we shall see that as He was obliged to perform all these actions, He was always governed in them by prudence and temperance, and that, however seemingly base and indifferent these actions were in themselves, He elevated them and made them

supernatural and holy by the noble and elevated intention with which He performed them. It is by this holy practice that faithful and fervent souls, making their chief aim to act in union with their divine Saviour, sometimes merit more by the performance of indifferent actions than others by the performance of actions which appear more dignified and elevated.

Secondly. As to our actions concerning our social duties, we ought to endeavor to familiarize ourselves as much as possible with the manner in which our blessed Lord conversed with men while He was on earth; bearing in mind the modesty which appeared in His exterior, without detracting at all from that majesty which made all who came to Him not blinded by passion, feel that He was more than man. We must remember His humility in all His actions, joined to a holy freedom of manner and an authority which could govern without imperiousness or presumption; His gravity in conversation, and His mildness and affability; His straightforwardness and simplicity, and His divine prudence; His zeal and power in all his discourses, so marvelously tempered by His discretion; His condescension in accommodating Himself to the weakness of some and bearing with the importunity of others; His patience in hiding the evil designs of some, in pardoning their injuries, in suffering the calumnies of some, and yielding to the persecution of others; His respect and deference for authority; His affection for the poor; His compassion for the afflicted; His constant efforts to relieve all who applied to Him

in their distress; and finally, His bounty and unlimited charity for all mankind. Can we look at such a model as this without being charmed by His perfections and longing to make ourselves like Him?

Thirdly. As to our actions towards God, our religious duties—prayer, communion, sacrifice, and penance, our blessed Lord offers us in Himself an infallible rule for their faithful performance.

The example we should follow in prayer is that of Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives; and it would seem that the Evangelists had labored to state all the circumstances of that prayer, that they might teach us thereby what should be the accompaniments of our devotions. What perfect humility and respect for His Father did our Lord manifest on that occasion! He prayed prostrate upon the earth. With what attention did He pray, being removed from His disciples that they might not be an occasion of distraction to Him! How sublime was the fervor of His prayer, and its perseverance,—persisting in it an hour in spite of His bodily weakness, and repeating often the same supplication! How full of confidence was His prayer to Him to whom He declared all things were possible! Yet with what humble submission did He pray! *Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from me: But yet not my will but Thine be done.*

To teach us the preparation necessary for communion, He wished to communicate Himself, to receive His own Body—that we might learn of Him the dispositions with which we should receive that divine gift. I. The Evangelist, in speaking of the

institution of the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, begins by telling us of the ardent charity which prompted the Son of God to give us His Body and Blood: *Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end* (John, xiii), in establishing this sacrament, that He might teach us that the principal disposition necessary for a right participation in the divine mysteries is charity, without which the Communion would be come a sacrilege. II. Jesus Christ declares that He desired with great desire to eat the pasch with His disciples before He suffered, that He might show us that to long earnestly to receive His Body is a good preparation for its reception. III. He condescended to wash the feet of His disciples, to instruct us in the humility with which we ought to approach these great mysteries. Finally, in the care with which He washed His disciples' feet, and warned them that those who were already clean still had need of further purification, we may see what ought to be the purity of our souls when we would receive the Body of Jesus Christ.

Then as regards sacrifice, with what a perfect spirit of submission and obedience did not Jesus Christ offer up to His Father that great sacrifice which commenced at the first moment of His conception, and lasted through His whole life, until it was consummated on the cross. What a desire of entire self-immolation; what a wish to sacrifice possessions, rest, glory, life, and all His being! What charity for His brethren, and even for His enemies! What zeal for the salvation of all men!

He is indeed that great Model which priests ought to keep ever before them when they offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the same as that of the Cross, since it is the same Victim who is therein offered, and who requires consequently in those who offer it the dispositions of Jesus Christ, who is the true but invisible offerer of the sacrifice, and who is represented by the priest.

Finally. As to penance,—although our blessed Lord was not and could not be a sinner, He chose to be a public and universal penitent, by taking upon Himself all our offenses and the obligation of their expiation and the satisfaction of His Father's justice for our sins as if they had been His own; that, by the confusion and humiliation with which He appeared before His Father when burthened with our sins, which had become in some manner His own through the deep sorrow which He felt for them, even to the sweating of blood,—and by His perfect submission to the covenants of His Father and to all the pains which were imposed upon Him for the expiation of our sins,—He might show us what dispositions are necessary to make our penance true, sincere, and efficacious.

Here let us add the practice of the imitation of Jesus Christ, taught by one of His most perfect imitators, St. Francis Borgia: an exercise most profitable, as it descends into the most minute details.

'As soon as you awake in the morning, says this great saint, think upon the happy moment when our blessed Lord was conceived in the womb of His

Mother, and remember how from that instant He loved His Father and all mankind, and with what fervor He offered Himself to death for your sake; and strive to imitate His charity and zeal. While you are dressing, remember either Herod clothing Him with the white robe, or His Immaculate Mother wrapping Him in swaddling clothes, and laying Him in the manger. While you are undressing, bear in mind how the soldiers stripped off His garments before scourging Him, and before nailing Him to the cross. When you enter a church, think of His presentation in the Temple and of the devotion with which He went thither to adore His Father. When you go to prayer, reflect upon His night of prayer in the Garden of Olives, and how He persisted in His prayer in spite of the fatigue and sorrow which weighed down His soul. When you hear Mass, picture to yourself that upper chamber where for the first time He changed the bread into His Body and the wine into His Blood,—or Calvary, where He offered Himself as a sacrifice to His Father. When you say the divine office, unite your thoughts to Him as He sang the hymn of thanksgiving after the Last Supper. When you eat, recall to mind His ordinary repasts with His disciples, or the feast to which He was invited by the Pharisee. When you give alms, remember Him distributing the multiplied bread and fishes to the people in the desert.

If you visit the sick, remember how He cured them. If any good deed of yours is misapprehended and imputed to you as a sin, remember how He was found fault with and murmured against because He

healed the sick on the Sabbath. If evil is spoken of you, bear in mind that the Pharisee said that Jesus Christ cast out devils only by the power of Beelzebub. If you are falsely accused, think what a false accusation He was obliged to bear before the high priest. If you are treated unjustly, consider how He, being innocent, was condemned to the most cruel of deaths.

If you are hungry, think of His fast of forty days in the desert. If you are thirsty, think of the thirst He suffered on the cross. If you are cold, remember that He endured the cold in the hour of His birth in the stable of Bethlehem. If your friends forsake you, do not forget that when He was captured by the Jews, His disciples abandoned Him. If you are obliged to separate from those who are dear to you, recall to mind His sad farewell to His blessed Mother before giving Himself up to His executioners. If you are afflicted by any trivial evil, remember the dreadful pain and anguish which He endured so patiently in His Passion. If you are drawing near to death, treasure up in your heart His dying words: *Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.*

CHAPTER IV

That Jesus Christ Is a Seal that We Ought to Press upon Our Hearts: Being the Fourth Step in the Imitation of Jesus Christ.

THE sacred Scripture calls Jesus Christ not only a mirror which reveals to us all the defects which hinder our perfect conformity with Him,—a rule by which we ought to measure all our actions, and a model which we ought to reproduce in ourselves,—but also a seal to be imprinted upon our hearts: *Put me as a seal upon thy heart.* There is this difference between the resemblance of a copy to its original, produced by painting and that produced by a seal;—that the first is only a representation of the idea which the painter has formed of the original, and the second is the impression of the form of the original itself. And this denotes in an admirable manner the interior resemblance which we ought to bear to our blessed Lord, without which all our other marks of resemblance to Him would be not only imperfect, but utterly useless. This is that *new man* of whom the Apostle speaks, *who is created in justice and holiness of truth,* in whom we ought to be clothed. It is to express this interior resemblance that we are counseled that Jesus Christ must dwell in us and we in Him; that we must labor to form Jesus Christ in our hearts; and that we ought to live only as if Christ lived in us: for *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,*

he is none of His (Rom., viii). Therefore, we ought to be animated with the spirit of Jesus Christ, if we wish to be real Christians, and to live up to the profession that we make of being His. This interior resemblance consists in having His spirit and in being animated with it. Now the possession of His spirit includes four things: I. To have the sentiments of Jesus Christ: to think and judge in all matters as He does. II. To have the affections and inclinations of Jesus Christ: to love and follow what He loves and follows; and to hate and shun all that He has hated and shunned. III. To have all one's conduct and every action founded on the same principle and tend to the same end as did the actions of our blessed Lord. IV. To possess and practice the same virtues that He possessed and practiced. This is what we may truly call living by the life of Jesus Christ, being animated with His spirit, and bearing a perfect interior resemblance to Him.

First. To have the Spirit of Jesus Christ is to have the same sentiments that He did—to judge of all things as He judged. Now He judged that true greatness consisted in humility: *He that is the greatest among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is the leader as he that serveth* (Luke, xxii); that the surest and shortest road to arrive at true greatness is humility: *He that shall humble himself shall be exalted* (Matt., xxiii); that the true happiness of the Christian is to be found in suffering: *Blessed are they that mourn* (Matt., v); that the Christian is never more blessed than when enduring *persecution for justice sake:* that to

be happy and rich we must either give up or at least be detached from earthly goods: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:* that that which is great in the sight of men is an abomination before God: that he alone who shall lose his life for His sake truly lives: and that the Kingdom of Heaven is only taken by violence. These are the sentiments of Jesus Christ: let us sound our hearts, without any attempt to flatter or deceive ourselves, and see whether they are ours. If our hearts answer that we judge thus of all these things, then we have indeed the spirit of Jesus Christ. If they do not, then it is vain for us to flatter ourselves that we have His spirit or are walking in His footsteps.

Secondly. To have the spirit of Jesus Christ is to have the same affections that He had; to esteem, love, and willingly embrace all that He esteemed and loved; and to despise, hate, and avoid, all that He despised, hated, and avoided. Now, Jesus Christ loved—at least with a reasonable love—poverty, suffering, and humiliation, not because they were in themselves attractive, but on account of their relation to the glory of His Father and the salvation of men, as being the surest means to promote both of those ends; and He esteemed Himself happy in being able to sacrifice His possessions, His glory, and His life to the glory of His Father and the salvation of mankind. And, on the contrary, He despised, hated, and fled from honors, riches, and pleasures, as being the greatest obstacles to the glory of His Father, and to man's salvation. If we have the spirit of our blessed Lord, we shall have affections

like these. If, however, we cannot go so far as, like Him, to love poverty, crosses, and humiliations—we must at least, for the sake of our respect and love for Him, esteem them as consecrated and made in some manner divine by their union with Him. If we cannot go so far as to seek them, as He did, for love of us, we must at least suffer them with patience and submission, when they are sent upon us by divine Providence, and embrace them with ardor when they are necessary to the advancement of God's glory, the salvation of our neighbor, or the securing of our own salvation. Let us examine ourselves and see if we have this disposition; for if we do not find it in our hearts, then we are very far from possessing the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly. To have the spirit of Jesus Christ is to have all our actions spring from the same principle, and tend to the same end as the actions of our Lord. Now what was the principle of all the actions of Jesus Christ, if not reason, faith, law, grace, charity, and the will of His eternal Father? Are these the principles of all our conduct? If they are not, then we have not the spirit of Jesus Christ. And what was the end of all His actions, but the glory of His Father and the salvation of men? Can we say that this is the sole aim of all our actions? Can we make any claim to the spirit of Jesus Christ on this ground?

Fourthly and finally. To have the spirit of Jesus Christ is to be in possession of His virtues, viz., humility, patience, meekness, mortification, contempt of the world, obedience, poverty, detachment

from earthly goods, charity, zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and a spirit of sacrifice which leads us to relinquish willingly our comforts, our goods, our interests, our pleasures, our glory, and our life, for the sake of God's glory, which we ought to prefer before all other things. It is in this that the spirit of Jesus Christ chiefly consists, and it will therefore form the subject of the following books.

Here, then, we see what it is to be animated with the spirit of Jesus Christ, to enter into His interior, and to live of His life. This is what constitutes, properly speaking, the essence of Christianity, and is its happiness, its glory and perfection. It can be truly said that he who is not animated with this spirit is not really a Christian: he is the body of a Christian, without the soul. Therefore, we ought to labor without ceasing to enter into the interior of Jesus Christ, and to acquire His spirit, inasmuch as all our happiness and perfection is to be found in so doing. "If thou hadst but once," says Thomas à Kempis, "entered into the interior of the Lord Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love, then thou wouldst not regard thine own conscience or inconvenience, but rather wouldst rejoice at troubles, if they should be cast upon thee; for the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself" (Imitation of Christ, ii. 1).

How happy is the soul which has gained possession of that spirit! It has found that hidden treasure of the Gospel, in finding which it finds its all, since there are no virtues, however eminent, to

which it may not, with that, aspire; no divine favors, however extraordinary, with which it may not hope to be crowned; no great designs for extending God's glory, which it is not capable of executing; because, being united with Jesus Christ, and animated with His spirit, it has become His living image, and the object of the love of the eternal Father, who, recognizing in it His only-begotten Son, is well pleased to pour out upon it the fullness of His graces and the most excellent gifts of the Holy Ghost, and to use it as an instrument for the accomplishment of His designs, for increasing His own glory, and procuring the sanctification of the souls of men.

But who, O blessed Saviour, can introduce us into this divine sanctuary—this Sacred Heart—this heavenly interior, if Thou dost not? It is only Thou, O Lord, who canst impart Thy spirit. Oh, vouchsafe to bestow upon us that Spirit which Thou didst send upon Thy Apostles, and which Thou hast promised unto us; that Spirit which Thou didst implore for us of Thy Father, and the title to the possession of which, Thou didst merit by Thy death upon the cross. We place all our confidence in Thy promise, and in the virtue of Thy Precious Blood.

Book the Third

OF THE VIRTUES THAT GOVERN OUR DUTIES TOWARDS GOD

IF it be true that the principal obligation of a Christian is to labor unceasingly to imitate Jesus Christ, and to acquire that conformity of heart and mind with Him, which is the essence of Christianity,—it is no less true that the virtues of Jesus Christ should be the chief object of that imitation. We shall therefore make these virtues the subject of the remainder of this work, and we shall treat of those virtues which shone most brightly in the life of Jesus Christ, and which most particularly set forth His spirit. We shall consider them chiefly under their relation to Him, and of this relation we shall endeavor never to lose sight.

We shall reduce these virtues to nine. In this third book, we shall treat of the three virtues that govern our duties towards God. The *first* is purity of intention, which makes us refer all our thoughts and actions to God and to His glory, and banish all thoughts of ourselves or of our own interests. The *second* is humility, which makes us attribute all the good that is in us or that is done by us to God and to the assistance of His grace; and to ourselves

nothing but impotence and sin. The *third* is obedience, which subjects us entirely to God or to our superiors for His sake.

In the *fourth* book, we shall treat of the virtues that govern our duties towards our fellow creatures. The *first* is the charity that obliges us to love them, to wish them well, and to do them all the good we can. The *second* is that sweetness of temper which represses every emotion of anger and resentment towards our fellow-men, and restrains us from wishing for their misfortune, or doing them any wrong. The *third* is patience, which makes us suffer without complaint the ills that others do to us.

In the *fifth* book we shall treat of the three virtues that govern our duties towards ourselves by regulating our overweening self-love in relation to the three great objects of our covetousness, which are, so to speak, the three elements of this corrupt world, of which St. John speaks. The *first* is contempt for the world, which governs our self-love in its relation to worldly honors and the esteem of men. The *second* is mortification, which governs our self-love in relation to pleasures. The *third* is poverty, or detachment from earthly goods, which governs our self-love in relation to riches.

TREATISE THE FIRST

Of Zeal for the Glory of God, or of Purity of Intention

CHAPTER I

Of the Nature of this Virtue

PURITY of intention is an act of charity, by which we refer whatever we do to God as to our last end: for charity consists not merely in a pious feeling prompting us to unite ourselves with God, but also in a generous inclination which urges us to labor for Him and to do all things for His glory.

In purity of intention three things may be remarked. *First,* its origin, which is charity. *Secondly,* its object, which is God, or the good which He wishes could be accomplished. *Thirdly,* the manner in which the intention is inclined to good, which is, either for the sake of pleasing God, of advancing His glory, or of doing His will. In these three ways we may consider God in our actions, which should all be referred to Him: for we please God by rendering ourselves similar to Him; since

He is the sole object of His infinite complacency, nothing can be pleasing to Him except in proportion to its resemblance to Him. We become like Him in laboring for His glory, since the aim of all His outward actions is to extend His own glory; and we extend His glory by knowing and loving Him; and we love Him, or, at least, we bear witness to our love by doing His will, as our divine Saviour says: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me* (John, xiv. 21). For the perfection of this intention, four qualities are necessary. *First,* it should be universal. *Secondly,* so far as human weakness permits, it should be real. *Thirdly,* it should be supreme. And *lastly,* it should be pure.

First. The intention of the glory of God which ought to animate all our actions should be universal, so that its influence should be felt not only in a general way upon our life, but upon all our actions in particular; so that not one of them, not even the most common, not even the most indifferent, not one of our thoughts or desires, should not refer to God and to His glory. St. Paul says: *Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do; do all to the glory of God* (1 Cor., x). Truly, since we belong to God by so many undeniable titles (that is to say, by the title of creation, of redemption, and of spiritual regeneration which is given to us in Baptism): since all that grows in a garden belongs to the owner of the garden;—do not all our actions belong to God, and ought they not to be referred to Him? Furthermore, God is no less our

end than our beginning, and as there is not one of our actions which does not depend upon Him, so ought there to be none which is not referred to Him. As we are incapable of forming the least thought or desire without the help of God, by which He wishes to unite Himself with us and to work with us—is it not right, on our side, that we should join ourselves to Him, should concur in His designs, and follow His intentions?

Secondly. The intention of the glory of God which ought to be the motive of our actions should be, as much as possible, real and actual. And here we must observe that we can refer our actions to the glory of God in three ways: I. By a habitual intention: II. By a virtual intention: III. By an actual intention. We call that intention habitual by which we offer the actions of the day to God in our morning prayers, without thinking of it afterwards. According to St. Bonaventura, this intention is not without influence upon our actions, but it does not suffice to render our ordinary actions supernatural and meritorious.

A virtual intention is that in virtue of which we perform an action, so that it is truly the cause of the action, although we may not constantly reflect upon it during the act; as for example, when a man sets out to walk to a certain place, although he may not think, at each step, of the place towards which he is going, he has, nevertheless, a virtual intention of advancing by each step towards that place, because it is in virtue of his design of going thither that he makes every movement to arrive there. We

can say the same thing of every action or undertaking whatever in which we engage for the sake of God's glory, and in which we should not have engaged for any other reason, so that His glory is its true cause. This virtual intention suffices to render actions which in themselves are indifferent and natural, good and supernatural, and consequently, deserving of eternal life.

Although this virtual intention is sufficient to render our actions good, supernatural, and meritorious, it is, nevertheless, of great importance to accustom ourselves to animate each action, or at least our principal actions, with an actual intention of the glory of God. *First,* because this actual intention gives to our actions a new luster and an increased merit. *Secondly,* because it guards us against many trivial defects which would otherwise escape our attention and mingle in our actions, if they were directed by an intention less pure. *Thirdly,* because this practice makes us perform our actions with greater fervor and ease, and in a more perfect manner. *Fourthly,* because this habit of offering all our actions to God by an actual intention, is one of the easiest and surest means, and at the same time least subject to illusion, to keep us constantly in the presence of God, for to labor continually in His sight is to have Him always present. *Fifthly,* because it is a practical union with God; for is it not loving God to labor for Him? *Sixthly,* because, when this intention of the glory of God is so remote from our actions as it is when one is content with offering them to Him in the morning

by a general intention, there is danger that this intention will relax by degrees, and that it will almost die out, through the coldness of a distracted mind, so as to have no influence at all upon our actions. *Lastly,* there is so much self-love in our hearts, that it is very difficult, unless we keep a most vigilant watch over ourselves, to prevent our being betrayed by a thousand human motives and selfish considerations, by countless notions of vanity, of sensuality, of a desire to please the world or to satisfy ourselves, or by human respect in its innumerable forms; in all of which cases the intention of the morning to do all things for God's glory is retracted and blotted out.

Thirdly. The intention of the glory of God ought to be supreme, so that we should consider the least thing that touches His interests of more importance than all that is great in the world's sight: because, as the glory of God is God's property, the property of any creature, however excellent, ought never to be compared with it,—as there is no more proportion between them than between God and His creatures, between whom there is an infinite distance and disproportion. This supreme situation of the glory of God will compel us to prefer even the least degree of His glory to our own most considerable interests; so that we should not hesitate a moment to sacrifice our interest and glory to the interest and glory of God, saying with the Psalmist: *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory* (Ps., cxiii). And if our glory and interest accord perfectly with the glory and interest of God, and meet

in harmony in the same action, still God's interest must always be preferred in our hearts to our own, so that His glory shall be the motive power and our own shall be kept subordinate to it. Thus, if I find my own interest and pleasure and glory in a good work, it must not be this that moves me to the accomplishment of it, but rather the glory of God. We shall know surely enough the sincerity of our intention, if, no longer finding our own interest and glory in the action, we pursue it with the same ardor, since it contributes to the glory of God.

Fourthly. This intention of the glory of God ought to be perfect and pure. The *first* consists in detaching ourselves from all creatures in such a manner as to love them no longer for themselves, but solely for God, so as to have in view in our actions not them, but God and His glory; and so as to seek to please not them, but God. The *second* consists in such detachment from ourselves as will make us seek no longer in our actions our own pleassure and profit, or glory, but rather the pleasure, the interest, and glory of God, forgetting ourselves, as it were, for His sake. The *third* consists in being so detached from ourselves and our own interests, that even in supernatural things (such as graces, spiritual consolations, progress in virtue, the acquirement of the most eminent virtues and the possession even of eternal happiness) we should love and seek them all, not so much because they tend to our own perfection and happiness, as for the reason that we may thereby promote the glory of God; not that we should not earnestly desire our eternal happiness,

but we should not desire it merely because it is our happiness, but because it is God's will that we should desire it, and because His greatest glory is found in our attainment of it; so that (if it were possible) if God's glory could be advanced by our renunciation of this happiness, a soul in this degree of purity of intention would not hesitate a moment. There are few souls which have reached this purity of love, but there are some. "He," said St. Bernard, who said "Bless the Lord, because He is good, not because He is good to me," had arrived at a higher degree of perfection than he of whom the same prophet speaks, who will bless the Lord when He shall have conferred a benefit upon him. St. Paul had reached that height when he said that he wished to be anathema for his brethren, that is, according to St. Chrysostom, to be deprived of eternal happiness, without, however, losing charity, since by that he might procure the eternal happiness of the whole Jewish nation, which could more advance the glory of God than would the happiness of a single man. St. Anselm had attained this degree of love when he protested that if he saw hell on one side of him and a sin on the other, he would not hesitate an instant, if he must fall one way or the other, to choose to fall into hell. St. Ignatius had attained it, when he said that if he were within one step of entrance into the eternal joys of heaven, and saw an opportunity of advancing God's glory on earth, he would turn away to use this opportunity, and to live still in the world in uncertainty of his salvation; and when he assures us that if he were in hell, with-

out losing charity, he should feel less misery than he did in seeing God despised and blasphemed. St. Bernard seems to add yet a fourth degree of perfection, which consists in performing our actions, not that we may please God, but because they are pleasing to God.

Finally. We can press this purity of intention not only to the preference of the glory of God to all other things, and to the forgetfulness of all that we may think only of His glory, but to propose to ourselves always and in all things the greater glory of God, comformably to the sentiment of St. Ignatius, who had always in his heart and on his lips the words "*To the greater Glory of God,*" so that they might be called the matter of his life. Indeed, there is scarcely a page of his Constitutions in which he does not mention the greater glory of God: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam.* St. Theresa also attained to this degree, for she made a vow always to choose that which should appear to her the most perfect.

CHAPTER II

The First Motive of Zeal for the Glory of God or of Purity of Intention. The Teaching of Jesus Christ upon this Virtue.

TAKE heed, says Jesus Christ, that you do not your good works to attract the approbation of men, otherwise you shall receive no reward from God, whom alone you ought to seek to

please. If you seek to please Him alone, you will fast and pray and do your other good works in secret, for you know that His eye penetrates the most hidden recesses and sees all that passes there. If your eye be single, if it be pure, your whole body will be enlightened; but if your eye be not single, if it be evil, your whole body will be in darkness; that is, if your intention expressed by the eye be pure and simple, all the conduct of your life will be pure and holy; but if the intention which animates all your actions be not pure nor simple, your whole life will be only a continued disorder. Our Lord attributes the unbelief of the Scribes and Pharisees to the vainglory which was the motive of all their designs and actions, and to their propensity to seek their own glory at the expense of that of God; and on the contrary, He thanks and blesses His Father, because, to set forth His glory, He reveals His secrets to little ones and the humble, and to those who do not seek their own exaltation. If Jesus Christ beseeches His Father to glorify His Son, it is only (as He has said) that He may thereby be able to glorify His Father. He assures us that to seek the glory of God is the sole way to avoid wandering from the path of justice and truth. He deplores the base timidity of those who, being persuaded and convinced by the splendor of His miracles that He was the Messiah, dared not declare their belief through fear of being contemned and persecuted and of losing the esteem of the world. *For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God* (John, xii).

CHAPTER III

The Second Motive of Zeal for God's Glory—the Example of Jesus Christ

JESUS CHRIST assures us that He came into this world not to seek His own glory, but that of His Father; and that He should do wrong in neglecting His Father's glory to advance His own, since His glory as a man, when compared with that of His Father, is as nothing. He declares that He seeks in all things to do the will of His Father, and procure His glory; that this is the object of all His designs, and motive of all His actions. This is the law, which, as He says by the mouth of the Psalmist (Ps. xxxix), was written in the middle of His heart from the first moment of His conception, which obliged Him, as He adds, to offer Himself in place of all the victims of the old law, which began to be displeasing to His Father—so as to be entirely sacrificed to His glory. It was, therefore, to fulfill the duties of a perfect victim, that He sacrificed Himself to the glory of His Father by a sacrifice worthy of Himself and worthy of His Father; that is to say, by a sacrifice which was continual in its duration, universal in its extent, and perfect in the manner of its accomplishment.

First. The sacrifice which Jesus Christ made of Himself to the glory of His Father was continual in its duration: it commenced at the first instant of His conception and His birth; it was renewed in His

circumcision and His presentation in the Temple, and it continued through His whole life; for in every moment of His life, He was in the disposition of a victim, and in a constant spirit of sacrifice, so that He often said to His Father: *Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not require. Behold, I come.* At last He consummated it upon the Cross.

Secondly. This sacrifice was universal in its extent, since He never conceived a thought, formed a desire, uttered a word, nor performed an action, which He had not consecrated to the glory of His Father, so that He could say at each motion of His mind, His heart, or His body: *I seek not my own glory: I do always the things that please Him!* (John, viii). If He was made man in the womb of a Virgin, if He was born in a stable, if He submitted to the pain and ignominy of circumcision, if He passed thirty years in the workshop of a mechanic, in an obscure position, and in constant obedience, if He preached, if He instructed the multitudes, if He wrought miracles, if He underwent so many and great fatigues, if He suffered such calumnies and persecutions, if, finally, He died on the cross—it was all for no other purpose but to procure the glory of His Father. And yet further, this sacrifice was universal, inasmuch as He sacrificed to the glory of His Father His body, His soul, His actions, His interests, His repose, His happiness, His pleasures, His glory, His life, and all His being.

Thirdly. This sacrifice has been perfect in the manner of its accomplishment; for if Jesus Christ sacrificed His possessions to the glory of His

Father, it was that He might be born in a stable, poor and neglected, that He might possess nothing during His life, and die upon a cross; if He sacrificed His happiness, it was that He might give Himself up to the most cruel of sufferings, even to falling in agony, even to a sweat of blood; if He sacrificed His pleasures, it was to expose Himself to the most dreadful torments that man can suffer: if He sacrificed His glory, it was that He might become the scorn of men and the outcast of His people. Finally, if He sacrificed His life, it was that He might expire on a cross, by a death alike cruel and ignominious; if He sacrificed His being, it was a sort of self-annihilation. Behold to what an extent a Man-God has carried the sacrifice of Himself to the glory of His Father! Judge from this what is the glory of God, and what we ought to do and suffer to promote it: for nothing teaches us so clearly the worth of God's glory, as to see a Man-God sacrificed even to annihilation for its advancement.

CHAPTER IV

Other Motives for Seeking in All Our Actions the Glory of God

THE *first* motive is taken from the consideration of God and the excellence of His glory. There is nothing so great or so glorious for us as to labor for the glory of God, because that glory is, in a certain way, the property of God, and

thus is something divine, and consequently of an infinite value and excellence.

The greatness of a moral good, like glory, is derived from the greatness and dignity of its possessor: thus the glory of a gentleman is more excellent than the glory of a peasant; and the glory of a prince or of a king is incomparably above that of a gentleman. If then, glory increases in proportion to the worth of its possessor, what must be the excellence of the glory of God! Ought we not to conclude that, as all creatures, however noble or gifted, are, when compared to God, as nothing—so all their glory taken together and compared to that of God, is less than nothing! Was there ever anything greater than the glory of Jesus Christ in His humanity? We can say without exaggeration that the glory of all the monarchs and conquerors of the world, compared to that of Jesus Christ, even in His humanity, is less than the light of a spark compared to the sun: and yet He Himself assures us that His glory as man, compared to that of His Father, is nothing: *If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing* (John, viii). What then can be the glory of all men compared to that of God? It is for this reason that the least act done for the glory of God, the slightest act of humility, of patience, of mortification, of charity, as a prayer devoutly said, a humiliation well received—since they relate to God, since they contribute to His glory, are something greater and more glorious in His sight, and consequently are more truly great and glorious than the most wonderful exploits of conquerors, than the government

of great kingdoms, than the conquest of empires: and that a person, poor, despised, unknown, and apparently the scorn of the world, who exercises himself constantly in the practice of virtue, and who acts solely with a view to the glory of God, is greater and more illustrious in His sight, than the sovereigns and conquerors of the world.

Hence it follows that we ought not to sacrifice the least degree of God's glory—that is by a single venial sin, to procure the greatest worldly advantages and honors, or to prevent the ruin even of all the beings in the world, because the good of the creature cannot be put in comparison with the good of the Creator, which is His glory. Therefore, if men had a proper idea of God, and comprehended His glory; how He works to procure His glory at the expense of their interests, their happiness and life, they would not hesitate a moment, but would consider it too great a happiness to make this sacrifice to Him, convinced that it would be less than to sacrifice the vilest slave to the glory of the noblest king. Ought not this thought to awaken us to seek the glory of God with all our powers, and to have no other aim but that in all our thoughts and actions?

The *second* motive to engage us to refer all our actions to the glory of God, is that nothing renders us more Godlike, and consequently more holy or happy: because God, being the source of all holiness and happiness, the more we resemble Him, the holier and happier we become: and as God's only aim in all His outward works is His glory, nothing renders us so like Him as to labor continually to

procure His glory. God was not obliged to create the world, for He possessed in Himself all happiness and glory, and needed not to seek them from without. But, having created the world, He could have done it for no other purpose than to promote His glory. Therefore the Holy Scriptures tell us that all that God has created, He has created for His glory; and He Himself declares, by the mouth of His prophet Isaias, that all that He will do, He will do for His own sake, and that He *will not give His glory to another* (Is., xlviii); as if He would say that He would gladly communicate all other goods to His creatures, but that He was so jealous of His glory that He would share it with no one, and desired that men, forgetting their own glory, should endeavor to promote His, and make it the object of all their actions; and should persuade themselves that they could never be so glorious and so happy as when they sacrificed their glory and happiness to the glory of God.

The *third* motive is that we shall find in this our truest interest and the greatest advantage we can desire; for there is not a single action, even the most common and indifferent, which by being performed for God, by being referred to His glory, does not become supernatural; and, being performed in a state of grace, does not merit for us the possession of God and a certain degree of eternal glory: and thus, as the most of the actions that compose our life are natural or indifferent, we can judge how great a treasure of merits he will amass who takes care to refer all of his indifferent actions to God's glory, in

a day, in a month, in a year, in his whole life; and also, on the contrary, how great a loss that person incurs who neglects this holy practice. To understand this better, let us suppose two persons living in the same community and daily performing the same actions, at the same time and in the same manner, at least externally,—but one of them is a person of a spiritual mind, who does not perform the slightest action, no matter how common or trivial, without offering it to God and referring it to His glory; and that the other is a person of natural manners, who labors according to humor or custom, or necessity, or, at the best, according to reason, though without thinking of referring to God the indifferent actions which make up so much of the day: let us suppose that these two persons find themselves at the same time about to appear before God and to receive the recompense of their actions; although they have both performed almost the selfsame acts, one would find himself crowned with virtues and merits and elevated to a high degree of glory in heaven; while the other, after having labored hard, would find himself empty-handed and excluded from those rewards which are given to those alone who have labored exclusively for the glory of God; for it is only that which is done for God which can obtain for us the possession of God.

CHAPTER V

Of the Means to Acquire and Practice This Zeal for God's Glory, and This Purity of Intention.

FIRST. We must labor incessantly to destroy our self-love, this inordinate attachment to our own interests, to earthly goods, to our pleasures, our honors and glory, which makes us seek ourselves in everything, and hinders us from seeking God and His glory alone. For this pure intention of God's glory pre-supposes pure love; and the only path to pure love is mortification of the senses, of the passions, of the natural inclinations, and a continual death, not only to all earthly things, but even to one's self.

Secondly. We must watch continually over ourselves and the movements of our hearts, to repress an infirmity of human considerations which unceasingly spring up there, and to repress the constant and almost imperceptible returns upon ourselves, our interests, our pleasures, and the thousand movements of self-love, to which people in common pay little or no attention, and which sometimes escape even the most virtuous souls, and mix themselves even in the most holy actions, destroying their merit, or, at least, diminishing their perfection.

Thirdly. We must bear in mind, particularly, never to commence any of our actions, especially

our principal actions, without referring them first to God by an actual intention, which we must endeavor to renew during the action if it be one of any great length. It is well even to enter into one's self after the action, to see whether in the dissipation of mind naturally caused by it some movement too natural or some less pure intention may not have escaped us, so that we may seek God's pardon and repair this defect as far as possible.

Fourthly. It is good to accustom ourselves to so holy and graceful practice, to make one's examination of conscience upon it for a considerable time; to propose, after having offered all one's actions to God in the morning for His greater glory, to renew this intention from time to time during the day; to beg of our Lord that He will frequently remind us of this thought, and solicit our guardian Angel to aid us therein.

Fifthly. There are certain exterior signs that we can use to render this salutary practice more easy, such as proposing to ourselves to renew our intention every time we hear the clock strike, by saying, "*All for Thee, O my God, all for Thee!*"—or when we cast our eyes upon a crucifix or some other holy image, or upon a cross that we may wear upon our person.

The love of God ought not to be less ingenious than human love: we think often, and without difficulty, of whatever we love. Let us love God sincerely, and it will be easy for us to think unceasingly of Him, and to refer all our actions to Him.

TREATISE THE SECOND

Of Humility

CHAPTER I

On the Nature of Humility and Its Different Degrees

HUMILITY, we are taught by St. Bernard, is a virtue which, by the complete knowledge it gives us of ourselves and our weaknesses, not only prevents our esteeming ourselves too highly or elevating ourselves above our proper state, but renders us even contemptible in our own eyes, and restrains our desire to be honored and highly esteemed by our fellow-men. This virtue has three degrees. The *first* consists in the knowledge that we are, of ourselves, nothing, and have nothing but want and misery, and can do nothing but sin and ruin ourselves. But this is not sufficient for Christian humility; for reason and philosophy go thus far: we need beyond this a penetrating and effective insight into our nothingness, our poverty and impotence, which shall lead us to despise ourselves interiorly, and to be in a frequent, if not a

continual disposition of confusion and self-forgetfulness before God and all His creatures, rejoicing in our hearts that we are nothing of ourselves and that God is everything, and loving our abject poverty and dependence because it makes more apparent the power and greatness and sovereign dominion of God. This is the first degree of humility, the foundation of all others, and beginners in the spiritual life ought to exercise themselves long and thoroughly in it, because it is the first stepping-stone to the highest perfection of this virtue.

The *second* follows naturally after the first, and consists in desiring that others should agree with us in our opinions respecting ourselves, and render us the same justice we render to ourselves, so that it would give us no pain to be internally despised by them even as we despise ourselves; it consists, too, in judging ourselves unworthy of their esteem and praise, by a spirit of equity and truth which not only does not seek nor desire their praise, but would forbid it as an injustice to ourselves or rather to God, in giving to us that which belongs to Him alone, since all the good that is in us comes from Him, so that we can say with sincerity: *"To God alone be honor and glory, but to us confusion of our face."*

The *third* degree consists in desiring that all men should act in conformity to their sentiments, and that as they have felt that contempt for us which we merit, they should give an outward expression to it in their words and actions, so as to humiliate us and fill us with confusion—that we may bear it

all not merely with patience, but that we should love it and receive it with joy, and should seek their reproaches with the same ardor and earnestness that worldlings seek fame and glory; not that these humiliations are desirable in themselves, but they are similar to those which Jesus Christ suffered, and by them we may testify our love for Him and merit His love. This degree of humility is most excellent; but it is rare, and is found only in the most perfect souls. It is to this degree, however, that St. Ignatius, in his Constitutions, desires all of his children to aspire, and to which he had himself attained in so admirable a manner, that, had he not feared that he might give scandal to his neighbor and hinder thereby the advancement of God's glory, he would have done the most extravagant things to draw upon himself the contempt of others and to make them overwhelm him with confusion, so that he might wear (as he said) the livery of Jesus Christ.

Some writers add yet a fourth degree of humility, but it is one which belongs only to apostolic men, to men of an extraordinary and eminent sanctity, to whom God has granted great talents and peculiar favors, and whom He uses as instruments for the execution of His wonderful designs. This degree consists in being little before His eyes, and in a constant state of self-annihilation, even amid the acts of the most heroic virtue, the greatest successes, and the applause of men. Such was St. Francis Xavier, who, while he was the object of the world's admiration for the eminence of his virtues, the

splendor of his great miracles, for the prodigious number of conversions, and the success that God gave to his apostolic labors, regarded himself not only as a useless but as a wicked servant, who corrupted the work of God, and who his carelessness and unfaithfulness hindered the accomplishment of God's designs upon the people for whose conversion he labored; so that he repeatedly begged St. Ignatius to send a faithful laborer to the Indies to make reparation for his faults, and to quicken his slothfulness. Such humility in such a man is the greatest of all the miracles of his life.

CHAPTER II

The First Motive of Humility: the Teaching of Jesus Christ Concerning This Virtue

ALTHOUGH the entire teaching of the Gospel is the teaching of Jesus Christ, yet He declares to us that the doctrine of humility is especially His own: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt., xi). It is that virtue which He wished us particularly to learn of Him, for it is peculiar to Him, being unknown to the world before He taught it: the light of reason had never made it clear to the old philosophers, who were ignorant even of its name.

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us the first degree of humility, and the low opinion we ought to have of ourselves in view of our weakness and impotence,

when He says that without Him we can do nothing whatever; that, as the branch can bear no fruit unless it be united to the vine, so we cannot do the least good except by being united to Him, and by His constant assistance (John, xv). For this reason He warns His disciples that when they shall have achieved anything by the help of His grace, so far from attributing the glory to themselves and being filled with pride, they ought to regard themselves as unprofitable servants, who have done only that which they were obliged to do, and which they could not have omitted without exposing themselves to punishment.

Our blessed Lord teaches us the second degree of humility, when He warns us that our good works ought not to be done for the sake of the approbation of men (Matt., vi). And to repress the pride that the Apostles might feel at their success in teaching and their miracles, He tells them that all their success ought not to be an occasion of vainglory to them, but rather a motive of humility, in the just fear they might have of falling by the same sin which cast Satan down from heaven. For this reason He forbade them to affect the title of master, as the Pharisees did, or to seek the highest places, or the marks of respect and distinction. For this reason too, He told them that if they did not become like little children—that is truly humble—they could never enter the kingdom of heaven;—that in the world those who govern others are the greatest, but that among His disciples, they are the greatest who prefer others to themselves.

Finally, He teaches us the third degree of humility when He commands His disciples to take everywhere the lowest place; when He says that they must rejoice to be persecuted and calumniated for love of Him, and to be subject to the contempt and outrages of men; and that, so far from seeking the esteem of men and all that which the world most values, they ought to despise and hate it.

CHAPTER III

The Second Motive of Humility—The Example of Jesus Christ

OUR Lord Jesus Christ gives us a fine example of the first degree of humility when He declares that He does nothing of Himself. When He sees that His teachings attract the admiration and praise of men, He assures them that they come not from Him, but from His Father, to whom alone they ought therefore to render glory; and He says that He counts His own glory as nothing when compared with that of His Father; that His testimony was nothing if it were unsupported by His Father. Although our blessed Lord, so far as He was man, was crowned with all graces and virtues in the most eminent degree possible to the most perfect creature ever formed by the almighty hand of God, He was notwithstanding in a constant state of self-annihilation before God's majesty, considering that there was an infinite distance between God

and Him, that He had nothing of Himself, that all that He possessed He held by the pure liberality of God. It was with this feeling that He says by the mouth of the Psalmist: *My substance is as nothing before thee.*

Jesus Christ practiced in a conspicuous manner the second degree of humility; for not only did he not seek the praises of men, but He always tried to prevent their being rendered to Him, and sometimes rejected them with indignation. When some one attributed goodness to Him, calling Him "good master," regarding Him only as a man, He would not permit it, saying that no one but God was good. When He saw that His miracles attracted the wonder and praise of men, He often disappeared to escape their applause; and frequently He forbade His followers to publish abroad His most splendid miracles. He commanded the three disciples who had witnessed the glory of the Transfiguration not to speak of it until after His resurrection. He imposed silence even upon Satan, who, impressed by the splendor of His miracles, declared Him to be the Son of God; and, while He presented Himself to His enemies when they sought to crucify Him, He fled away when He learned that the people desired to make Him their king.

Lastly. We may say that the entire life of Jesus Christ was a continual example of the third degree of humility; for He made opprobrium and humiliation the object of His love and His most earnest research. He humiliated Himself in the Incarnation, even to annihilation, in uniting Himself to

human nature, in despoiling Himself of all His greatness and glory to clothe Himself with our weaknesses. He desired to be born of a poor mother, in an abandoned stable, and to be cradled in a manger. He received in His circumcision the work of sin, and the character of the sinner, thus subjecting Himself to the greatest of humiliations. He spent the first thirty years of His life in the shop of a mechanic, in the humblest employment, and in a continual and entire dependence and obedience unknown to almost the whole world, and contemned even by those who ought best to have known Him.

When He appeared in public, He commenced by ranking Himself with sinners, by receiving the baptism of St. John as if He had been indeed a sinner, and needed like others to be purified of His sins. He chose the poor and unlearned for His disciples—men without high birth, without merit or talents; and it was with them that He passed the three years of His public career.

He voluntarily suffered the worst contempt and calumny. He passed in the opinion of many for an impostor, a seducer, a blasphemer, an enchanter —for a man having dealings with Satan. Lastly, in His Passion, He was seized as a thief, was struck like an insolent person, was treated like a criminal by Caiphas, was sent away by Herod with scorn and outrage as a fool, was scourged as a slave in the house of Pilate, was condemned to a shameful death, attached to a gibbet between two criminals as being the worst of the three, so that a prophet

said of Him that He should be saturated with reproaches. For this reason Isaias speaks of Him as one *struck by the hand of God and afflicted.*

How can a Christian who believes all this and adores this self-annihilated God still be proud? How can he continue to seek after worldly honors and glory?

CHAPTER IV

Other Motives Which Impel Us to Practice the First Degree of Humility

THE first degree of humility consists, as we have said, in entertaining an humble opinion of ourselves, founded on a perfect knowledge of our weakness and poverty. To establish ourselves firmly in this first degree of humility, without regarding the motives of humiliation which we have on the side of nature, let us look at man in his supernatural state; this is to say, in his most elevated condition, and from that we can draw the most powerful motives of humility, whether he be regarded in his relations to the past, the present, or the future.

The *first* motive may be drawn from a consideration of the past. I leave all considerations of the past which can humiliate us, such as our having been created out of nothing, conceived in sin, and our being subject to so many weaknesses and miseries; and consider alone this fact, viz.: that we have sinned. If we had committed only a single

mortal sin in all our past life, and that a sin of thought—the consideration of that alone contains the most powerful motives of humiliation, and the strongest reasons why we should unceasingly annihilate ourselves before God.

First. By the commission of this one mortal sin, I have treated with contempt the majesty of God, who is worthy of an infinite honor, by preferring a vile, perishable creature to Him. Oh, what contempt do I not merit for having despised my God! I merit an infinite contempt; and God punishes me with it, so long as I am in mortal sin. Ought I not then to conform my sentiments to His, which are so just and true, and which ought consequently to be the rule of our thoughts?

Secondly. If I have committed a single mortal sin, I have deserved hell, and consequently an infinite reproach and an eternal confusion; and if God had permitted me to die in this state, as has happened to so many others, I should be now an object of the hatred and scorn of all the saints, and of God Himself—the plaything and reproach of the demons:—behold, what was my due—behold, what would have been my fate if God had done me strict justice. So, when we are despised—when we meet with some humiliation, some confusion, instead of resenting it, let us say: "Alas, Lord! I merit an eternal confusion; I thank Thee that Thou art content with giving me this trivial one, and I receive it gratefully as a mark of Thy mercy, and will cherish it in a spirit of penitence and thankfulness."

Thirdly. I know certainly that I have committed

various mortal sins, but I cannot be equally certain that God has pardoned them: I am sure that I have merited hell—that is, an infinite and eternal pain—and I am not certain that God has remitted this pain—so that I could not answer, if I were to die at this moment, that hell was not my portion. Nobody, says the Holy Spirit, knows whether he is worthy of love or hatred. What a motive of humiliation is there in this thought? It has made the greatest saints tremble; what thoughts ought it not to awaken in sinners!

The *second* motive of humility is derived from the consideration of the present: there are five considerations concerning our present state which ought to humiliate us exceedingly.

The *first* is our absolute inability to do anything supernaturally good without the help of divine grace. *"You can do nothing without me,"* said our Saviour. Therefore St. Paul concludes that we cannot of ourselves have the least good thought or desire; that we cannot even pronounce the name of Jesus in a meritorious manner, without the help of the Holy Ghost; that we cannot even acknowledge our weakness and impotence, nor desire, nor beg, as is necessary, to be delivered from it, without God's help; that we cannot overcome temptations, much less produce any act of a lively faith, of a sincere contrition, of an ardent charity, if we are not awakened and assisted thereto by the grace of God. Can there be an impotence for the accomplishment of good more universal or more entire than ours? And can we perceive this and still be proud?

The *second* thing which ought still more to humiliate us is that beyond our inability to do good of ourselves we have also a strong inclination to evil. We are all born with the taint of original sin; and the natural effects of original sin are ignorance and error in the understanding, instability and corruption of the will, irregularity in all our powers and senses, and lastly an unruly concupiscence which revolts against the commands of God and our understanding, and carries us away almost in spite of ourselves, hindering us, according to St. Paul, from doing the good that we would, and making us do the evil that we would not. It was this that impelled St. Augustine to say that there was no crime, however frightful, which had been committed by one man, which might not be committed by another however virtuous he might appear—if He who has made man did not assist him with His grace; so that there is no saint who might not say with the same great Father of the Church: "I thank thee, O Lord, not only for the many sins which I have committed and Thou hast pardoned, but also for those which I have not committed, because Thou hast restrained me from them: for had I not been held up by Thy grace, there is no crime into which I might not have fallen."

The *third* consideration which ought to humiliate us is the littleness of the good we do when we are assisted by grace to do some good actions in spite of our impotence for good and our inclination to evil; that all our good is so small, whether we compare it to the greatness of the God we serve, or of

our obligations to Him, or of the reward He holds out to us; or to the good which so many saints have accomplished, and the virtues which illustrated their lives. Compare our patience with that of Job, our charity with that of St. Peter or of St. Paul, our mortification with that of St. Bernard, our humility with that of St. Francis, our purity of intention with that of St. Ignatius, our fervor in prayer with that of St. Theresa, our mildness with that of St. Francis of Sales: alas! if we compare our virtues with the virtues of these great saints, they will disappear, or will rather seem like vices than virtues.

The *fourth* consideration which ought to humble us is the imperfection which is always more or less mingled with our best actions. If we weigh our actions with the weights of the sanctuary, how few of them will bear the test; that is, how few are done with an entirely pure intention! How few there are of which God is the sole principle or motive! How few, even of our holiest acts, in which we are not somewhat influenced by humor, or passion, or human respect, or vanity, or some other emotion of self-love, without perceiving it through want of vigilance over the movements of our hearts! How many persons, even of those who appear religious, are taken by surprise at the hour of death, when, after having, it would seem, labored much, they find that they have really accomplished nothing, because they had not a pure intention in their good actions; since all that is not done for God is lost for eternity.

The *fifth* thing which ought to humiliate us in the good we do is the inconstancy of our labors. To-

day we are fervent and courageous; to-morrow we shall be tepid and slothful. To-day we are faithful, recollected, and attentive to ourselves, to-morrow we shall be negligent, unfaithful, and dissipated. In our prayers we make the best resolutions in the world; but our prayers being finished, we break them with the same facility with which we made them. We seek for great occasions to show our courage and fidelity to God when they are absent; if they present themselves, we are slow and careless to embrace them. If we resolve, it seems to be only to break our resolutions a moment after, so that it can be said that we are only constant in our inconstancy. Ought not this to be a great cause of humiliation for us, to be able to count so little upon ourselves and our good resolutions?

The *third* motive of humility is drawn from the consideration of the future, and our terrible uncertainty concerning our predestination and our being in a state of grace, upon which our predestination and salvation depend. Am I predestined? Am I among the reprobate? Shall I be saved? Shall I be condemned? I cannot answer these questions with certainty. How terrible is this uncertainty in an affair so important! And how humiliating it is! All that I know is, that I cannot be saved without the grace of perseverance, and it is of faith that I cannot merit this grace, nor assure myself of it. Of what can I assure myself? Of the will of God? That is unknown to me. *Who hath known the mind of the Lord?* asks St. Paul, *or who hath been His counselor?* (Rom., xi). If St. Paul,

who had been raised even to the third heaven, did not know it, who can presume to? How then can I assure myself of my own will, blind, weak, corrupted, inconstant as it is? Even if I could assure myself of my good works, ordinarily so full of defects when they should be perfect, yet they could not infallibly merit for me the grace of perseverance. Can I assure myself of the graces I have received? Who has told me that I shall always be faithful to them? Who ever received more graces than Solomon? God wished to make the divine magnificence resplendent in him by the abundance of the gifts with which He crowned him; but he, it is probable, had not the gift of perseverance.

So many great men, like Tertullian and Origen, who had astonished the world by the splendor of their virtues and the abundance of graces with which God had favored them, have still more astonished it by the greatness of their fall, from which they appear never to have risen. Finally, can I assure myself of the holiness of my state in life? Is it more perfect, is it more holy than that of Judas, companion and apostle of Jesus Christ, instructed from His very lips, a witness of His miracles and His virtues? Yet he becomes a thief, a traitor, an apostate, and dies at last in despair. *Behold,* says Job, *they that serve Him are not steadfast, and in His angels He found wickedness. Behold, among His saints none is unchangeable, and the heavens are not pure in His sight. How much more is man abominable and unprofitable who drinketh iniquity like water?* If the stars fall from

heaven, what shall become of us who are only dust and ashes? If the columns of the firmament have been broken, how shall we who are only feeble reeds sustain ourselves?

CHAPTER V

Of the Motives Which Urge Us to Practice the Second and Third Degrees of Humility

THE second degree of humility consists, as we have said, in not seeking the esteem or approbation of men; and the third, in enduring their contempt first with patience, secondly with joy, and lastly in endeavoring to desire and seek it. As nothing appears more difficult to nature, more opposed to our inclinations, or even more inconceivable to our reason, we require powerful motives to enable us to rise above repugnances so natural and reasons apparently so strong. These motives may be reduced to three. The *first* is that we find our true greatness and glory in humility and humiliation. The *second* is that our perfection consists in the same. The *third* is that it is the shortest and surest way to the acquirement of true peace and happiness.

First. We find our true greatness and glory in the practice of humility and in humiliations, whether sought for or accepted for the love of Jesus Christ. If we had no other reason concerning this truth than the testimony of our blessed Saviour, can we doubt of it without accusing Him either of

being deceived Himself or wishing to deceive us, when He assures us that humility is the surest road to true greatness, and that *he that shall humble himself shall be exalted;* that among men, the greatest are those who hold the highest rank and command others; but that in His kingdom, the greatest are those that are most humble, and the worthiest are those who abase themselves to be the servants of others? This truth, which appears a paradox to some, rests, however, upon solid and convincing reasons.

Is it not certain and evident, that the more noble and excellent an object is, the more the means of attaining that object most effectively become noble and excellent? Now the glory of God being the noblest object, not only which man, but which God Himself can propose, since it is of an infinite dignity, since it is the goodness of God and includes in itself all other good which is only good by its relation to that; it follows necessarily, that if humility and humiliations are the surest means to procure God's glory, nothing is greater or more excellent than humility and humiliation, and nothing renders us greater or more glorious than to practice humility and to embrace gladly all humiliations. Now, can we doubt that humiliations are the most suitable means to procure the glory of God, since Jesus Christ, who is eternal wisdom, and who consequently cannot be deceived, coming into the world to repair and procure the glory of His Father by the most efficacious means, chose humiliations as the surest means of arriving at that end?

Neither is it less certain nor less evident that the nearer we approach to the source of all greatness and glory, the closer our relation becomes with it, and the greater and more glorious we become; nor can we doubt that Jesus Christ, God and man, in whom, according to St. Paul, *dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporally,* is the source of all true greatness and glory. The more then we draw near to Him, the more closely we are related to Him—the greater and more glorious we become: now we are never more closely related to a self-annihilated God, we are never more like Him, than when we are perfectly humble; and we are not perfectly humble, if we not only do not suffer with patience, but even joyfully embrace humiliations for the love of Jesus Christ. We seek vainly, says St. Bernard, for the virtue of humility, if we fly from the path of humiliation. We are then never greater or more glorious than when we are truly humble, and when for the love of Christ we voluntarily embrace humiliations.

Secondly. Our perfection consists, at least in part, in humility and love of humiliations. This is a truth which both reason and faith teach us, that our perfection consists in an entire conformity of heart and mind, of affections and thoughts, with Jesus Christ: now Jesus Christ having esteemed and loved nothing so much as humiliations, having embraced nothing with greater ardor, as appears from His maxims, His mysteries, and every action of His life;—we can consequently only conform our hearts and minds to His—in a word, we can be perfect only by highly prizing and loving humiliations,

and by embracing them willingly for love of Him. Indeed, we may say that the state of abjectness and humiliation is the happiness of a heart truly Christian, of a heart which is penetrated with the love of Jesus Christ, which has entered into His interior life. We are not perfect—nay more, we are not even Christian, except so far as we have the spirit of Jesus Christ; and we have His spirit only so far as we have a love for the abjectness and self-annihilation of His life. Nothing is really so humiliating for us as to be so far removed from humiliation, because nothing ought to make us feel so keenly how far we are from having the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly. Humility and the love of humiliation are the sure path to true happiness. Nothing can so much contribute to our happiness in this life as to be able to answer to ourselves that we love Jesus Christ, and that we are loved by Him; and nothing can give us so certainly this double assurance as to love humiliation for His sake. For, *first,* as there is nothing so difficult as to sacrifice our own glory and honor, so there is nothing which so demonstrates the generosity of our love for Jesus Christ as to make this sacrifice for Him. To a generous soul the sacrifice of goods and of life itself costs less effort than this; and when one reaches this point, he can truly say that he loves Jesus Christ. It is only an ardent love for Christ which can make us love and embrace humiliation; and it is only the love of humiliation for His sake which is an incontestable proof of our love for Him. And if we carry the generosity of our love to that point, can we believe

that Jesus Christ will allow us to surpass Him in generosity, and that He who loved us even when we did not love Him, can fail us when we are testifying our love for Him with so much generosity and disinterestedness? Furthermore, our blessed Lord cannot help loving those who are like Him. The same reason which obliges Him to love Himself with a necessary and infinite love, obliges Him to love those who are related to Him by their resemblance to Him. And what makes us resemble Him more than the practice of humility and being in a state of humiliation? And if we are morally certain that we love Jesus Christ and are loved by Him, can anything be wanting to our happiness? We can truly say that this assurance makes earth a paradise for us.

Finally. If all the happiness of life does not consist in peace of heart, there is certainly no happiness without peace; and where can peace be found more surely or more constantly than in the humble heart? For what is it which most commonly disturbs our peace? It is the thought that some persons have treated us with contempt, or the fear that they will do so: it is the thought that we are esteemed less than we merit, and that we have not the rank which we deserve. An humble man has no such thoughts as these: he is free from all these fears: if he is treated with contempt, it is what he wishes and what he believes himself to merit; and as he always takes the lowest place, he finds nobody to dispute it with him or to disquiet him in the possession.

CHAPTER VI

Of Defects Contrary to Humility

WE cannot know well the nature of humility, without knowing the defects which are opposed to it: nor can we acquire this virtue except by laboring earnestly to remedy those defects, which ought to be the subject of our examinations of conscience. These defects are:

First. Self-complacency upon our good qualities, whether of body or mind, whether natural or supernatural: also an excess of thought concerning our good qualities, and a lack of effort to prevent the movements of vanity that spring therefrom.

Second. Speaking too easily of one's self and of things favorable to one's self, or of that which can give occasion to others to notice or to speak of us.

Third. To prefer one's self mentally to others, whether for virtue or for talents, and to consider voluntarily their defects rather than their good qualities; also to act in a contrary manner concerning ourselves.

Fourth. To feel chagrined at hearing others praised, and to try cunningly to hinder their being so highly esteemed.

Fifth. To excuse one's self always when blamed, to refuse to recognize one's faults, or to avow that one has been in the wrong.

Sixth. To have a certain air of self-sufficiency and superiority in conversation, and a contempt for others and their opinions, also to wish always to take the lead.

Seventh. To dispute with an obstinate attachment to one's own opinion, to prefer one's opinion always to that of others, persuading one's self that he has light on the matter which others have not.

Eighth. To allow one's self to be too much dazzled by high employments, by great successes, by honors, by reputation, and by making too much account of all these things, instead of regarding them with fear or pity like a truly humble soul.

Ninth. To feel too much chagrined when our enterprises, even those undertaken for the glory of God, or the salvation of our neighbor, do not succeed;—for this often proceeds less from our zeal than from a secret pride which makes us fear that the lack of success may draw blame or contempt upon us.

Tenth. To feel bitterly or coldly toward persons who appear not to esteem us so highly as we think we deserve; to revenge their contempt by despising them, or giving way to a malignant joy when others appear to despise them or speak disparagingly of them.

Eleventh. To speak too easily or without real necessity of the defects of others, from a feeling of secret jealousy or from a desire to be preferred to them.

Twelfth. To wish that others should know and remark our good qualities and good works, and to

do them with the view of meriting thereby their esteem and approbation.

Thirteenth. To perform more willingly works of supererogation than of obligation, because they distinguish us and flatter our vanity and satisfy our self-love.

Fourteenth. To do more willingly a good work which is apparent and gives fame than that which is known to God alone; also to have no care to refer all that we do and all the praises our actions draw upon us to God, instead of saying with the Psalmist: *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory.*

Fifteenth. To desire perfection and all virtues and spiritual gifts more for love of our own excellence than with a view to the glory of God.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Means of Acquiring Humility

THERE are two kinds of means which can be used to obtain this virtue: the first is general, and can be used with equal propriety in regard to all virtues; but the second is peculiar to this virtue.

The general means are: I. To beg frequently of God the virtue of humility: II. To meditate often upon the motives of humility which we have enumerated: III. To keep before our eyes the admirable examples of humility given us by our Lord, and to remember that it is particularly of this virtue that

He spoke, when He said: *Learn of me, because I am humble of heart:* IV. To read frequently in the books which treat of this virtue, such as "Christian Perfection" by Alphonsus Rodríguez, and "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis: V. To communicate often with this intention: Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist produces humility, not only as a working cause, but by way of example, because He there gives us such an example of humility: VI. To refer all our good works (alms, mortifications, etc.) to this intention; and to do the same with all our private actions.

The particular means are: I. To elicit interior acts of humility, using those which are expressed in Holy Scripture, saying with King David: *My substance is as nothing before thee* (Ps., xxxviii). *I am needy and poor, O God help me* (Ps., lxix). *Have mercy on me for I am weak* (Ps., lxiii);—or saying with Jeremias, *I am the man that see my poverty* (Lam., iii). II. To perform external acts of humility,—as to kiss the ground, to serve the poor, to bind up their wounds, to make known our failings, or at least not to hide them or excuse them when we are accused of them, unless we are obliged to do so by charity or care for the edification of our neighbor: III. To make our examination of conscience with great fidelity and exactness upon the defects opposed to this virtue enumerated in the preceding chapter.

TREATISE THE THIRD

Of Obedience, or of Submission to the Will of God

CHAPTER I

Of the Nature of Obedience and of its Degrees

OBEDIENCE is a virtue by which we submit to God and to His holy will, and to men, for love of God.

First. Obedience obliges us to submit ourselves to God and to His will: this will is pointed out to us:—I. By His commandments, to which we are bound by an obligation so indispensable that without it we cannot hope for salvation. II. This will is pointed out by the counsels of Jesus Christ, which, though not of obligation, are most advantageous to follow as conducing to perfection. But there are occasions when these counsels become obligatory by the engagements voluntarily assumed. III. This will is pointed out by the commands of superiors, because they occupy in our regard the place of God by whose authority they act. IV. This will of God is pointed out by the lights and inspirations of grace, which we cannot resist without resisting the will

of God. Finally, this will is pointed out by the commands of Providence; for we ought to believe as an article of faith that God knows all and disposes all as He pleases, and that nothing happens which is not disposed by His orders: therefore, we ought to obey and submit ourselves entirely to His will, whether as regards our state of life, or condition, our employment, the success of our cares and labors, or whether as regards our health, our repose, or our happiness, or the accidents of life, the loss of our goods, of our parents, or friends, their falseness or perfidy, or all afflictions, persecutions, calumnies, or sicknesses; or whether as regards our death and all its attendant circumstances, we ought to believe that it all happens by God's command, and that His will is wise, holy, and full of goodness for us, disposing everything for the best, if not for the interests of time at least for those of eternity, which are those which God most regards, and which are the only ones which ought to be considered by a Christian, who should be guided by the light of faith.

Secondly. Obedience obliges us to obey and submit to the will of men for the love of God, in two ways. *First,* by the natural law which engages all men to obey those who, either by right of nature or by their condition, or by some other disposition of Providence, are their legitimate superiors: thus subjects are obliged by natural law to obey their rulers, children their parents, servants their masters. *Secondly,* by religious obedience, which is the obedience of perfection, by which we bind ourselves even by a vow to obey, for love of God,

persons who naturally have no right to command us, through a desire to sacrifice to God that which is most dear to us, that is, our liberty and our will: and it is to religious obedience that we apply especially the name of the virtue of obedience.

There are three degrees of religious obedience: the *first* consists in executing completely everything commanded by a superior without omitting anything: this is, properly speaking, exterior obedience, which is the most imperfect degree and does not exclude repugnances of the will and many difficulties in its execution.

The *second* consists in submitting one's will perfectly to that of one's superior, so as to renounce one's own will and inclinations, and to have none but his; this degree is much more perfect than the first, which hardly deserves the name of obedience, or, if it be obedience, is but the obedience of a slave.

The *third* degree consists in submitting one's judgment and intellectual lights to the judgment and intellect of one's superior, judging as he judges, yielding to all his reasonings, almost as in a matter of faith, not permitting one's self even to examine the reasons or motives which may influence the superior in commanding as he does, persuading one's self that the right is always on his side, although we may not see it or understand it; blinding one's self, so to speak, by a sincere humility and wise simplicity. It is this degree of obedience, so perfect and so difficult to practice, that St. Ignatius exacts of his disciples, and that he enjoins so strongly in his admirable letter on Obedience.

CHAPTER II

The First Motive of Obedience.—The Maxims of Jesus Christ on this Virtue.

THE disciples having invited our Lord to eat after His long interview with the Samaritan woman, He answered them: *I have meat to eat which you know not.* Then the disciples said among themselves: *Hath any man brought Him to eat?* Upon which Jesus said: *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me that I may perfect His work.* Because, as He elsewhere says: *I have come down from Heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me.* Jesus Christ, in teaching us how to pray, desired that one of the first things which we should ask of God was that His will might be done as perfectly by men on earth as by the angels and saints in heaven; and declares that it is not those who say "Lord, Lord," who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who shall do the will of His Father. His disciples having come to tell Him that His mother and His brethren awaited Him, He answered that He recognized whoever did the will of His Father as His mother and brother and sister; that is, that He had the same tender affection for them as if they were His brothers or sisters, or even His mother. He says that the servant who knows the will of his master and does it not, shall be punished more severely than he who does not the will of his master because he

is ignorant of it; but that the latter shall be punished because of his neglecting to learn his master's will. He teaches that the way to know the truth of His doctrines is to be truly faithful in doing the will of His Father; that this will is marked out in His commandments, and that whoever loves Him ought to do His will, which can be done only by keeping His commandments. *If any one love me,* He says, *he will keep my word and will observe my commandments, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him* (John, xiv). He gives us to understand that in obeying our superiors and doing their will, we obey God and do His will; and that, on the contrary, when we disobey our superiors and contemn their commands, we disobey and treat with contempt God and His commands. *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me* (Luke, x). Finally, He counsels the Jews to obey the Scribes and Pharisees, however bad their morals or visible their hypocrisy, because they were their superiors and occupied the chair of Moses (Matt., xxiii).

CHAPTER III

The Second Motive of Obedience—the Example of Jesus Christ.

ST. PAUL teaches us that from the first moment that Jesus Christ came into the world, conformably to the prophecy of David, He said to His Father: *Lord, Thou desirest no more victims*

and sacrifices, such as until now have been offered to Thee. Then said I, behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do Thy will, O God. I submit with my whole soul, O Lord, I make thy will as an indispensable law to me: I have graven it in my heart to be the rule of my conduct (Heb., x). That is what He accomplished perfectly in His life, which was a continual exercise of obedience. For, *first,* He always obeyed His Father; *secondly,* during thirty years of His hidden life He obeyed the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph; *thirdly,* in His passion He obeyed His judges, unjust as they were, and His executioners.

First. The entire life of Jesus Christ was only a continual exercise of obedience and submission to the will of His Father: it was in obedience to that will that, immediately after His birth, He went into exile, that He concealed His great talents and ardent zeal for the glory of His Father and the salvation of souls in the workshop of an artisan, to lead there an obscure and, it would seem, a useless life. He appeared in public only at the times indicated to Him by His Father, and when anything was sought of Him, however good it might be, if He had not received the command of His Father from on high, He said that the time marked out by His Father had not arrived, that His hour was not yet come. He confined His ardent zeal for the conversion of the world to the limits of Judea, because, as He says, His Father sent Him only for the sheep of the house of Israel. But this perfect submission to the will of His Father appears in no part of His life so con-

spicuously as in His Passion. Thus, when it was necessary to go to the Garden of Olives, He said to His disciples: *That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment so do I. Arise, let us go hence.* If He allowed His natural repugnance to the torments of His Passion to appear, it was only to show us His courage in overcoming that repugnance and sacrificing His strongest inclinations to the will of His Father. It was with this view that He said: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt* (Matt., xxvi). Lastly, it was to mark the fidelity with which He had during His whole life done the will of His Father, and the courage with which He had sacrificed all to Him, that before dying He declared to all the world, *It is consummated.* For the same reason, the Apostle tells us that He was *made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,* and St. Bernard adds that He lost His life rather than lose obedience.

Secondly. Our blessed Lord obeyed Mary and Joseph in all things during the thirty years of His hidden life. All that the Gospel tells us of the life of our Lord from the age of twelve years, when He was found in the Temple, up to the age of thirty years when He appeared in public to preach His Gospel, is that He was subject to Mary and Joseph. Here we may see to what He reduced His occupation during this time—here we may see His miracles, His preaching, and the only examples He wished to set before us during nearly thirty years. What is more

worthy of our admiration than this obedience if we examine all its circumstances and penetrate all its mysteries! I. Who is it who obeys? He who obeys, allowing Himself to be governed as an infant, is God—is the Eternal Word—is uncreated wisdom itself, He who governs with equal wisdom and ease the entire universe, and who (as Scripture says) sustains it with three fingers. II. Whom does He obey? Mary and Joseph, that is, creatures, who, however enlightened, however perfect they may have been, had only a limited intelligence, and who, compared to the infinite intelligence of God, had less proportion than a spark with the sun: nevertheless He obeyed them as submissively as He did His Father whose authority He respected in them. III. How did He obey? Entirely, promptly, perfectly; not contenting Himself with merely doing what they ordered, but submitting His will entirely to them, having, in fact, no will but that of Mary and Joseph. IV. In what did He obey? In things most humble and painful, which seem entirely unworthy of a God, rendering to Mary and Joseph those services which servants render to their masters, and the children of the poor to their parents, laboring at the trade of Joseph.

Thirdly. Jesus Christ obeyed even unjust men and sinners. He wished even before His birth to give us an example of obedience, in obeying the edict of the Emperor Augustus, which obliged Mary and Joseph to journey to Bethlehem; desiring to obey in being born, as He did to die in obeying. He submitted to the sentence of Pilate, unjust as it was,

because he had authority as a ruler, although he abused it: finally, He obeyed even His executioners, considering them as executing the orders of His judges, or rather as ministers of the justice of His Father, who had given His Son into their power, according to the words of Jesus Christ Himself: *Thou shouldst not have any power against me unless it were given thee from above:* that He might teach us that however unjust, however violent our masters and superiors may be, inasmuch as they are our legitimate masters and superiors, we ought to regard them as clothed with the authority of God, whose place they occupy; and consequently we ought to obey them when they command nothing contrary to the law and will of Him who is their master as well as ours.

CHAPTER IV

Another Motive of Obedience

THE first motive which ought to attract us to the practice of obedience, is that obedience is the most pleasing sacrifice that we can offer to God.

First. Because we offer to Him by this sacrifice, our best and dearest possession, our will and our liberty. Therefore God says Himself by the mouth of His prophet Samuel: *Obedience is better than sacrifices; and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams* (1 Kings, xv). And St. Gregory ex-

plains the reason of this by saying that in sacrifices the flesh of animals is immolated, but in obedience, our own will. Even the most excellent sacrifices, if they be made contrary to obedience, become abominable, and God declares that He regards them as a species of idolatry. Finally, by other sacrifices we yield up to God our goods, our pleasures, or at most our body; but by obedience we sacrifice our soul, our heart, ourselves.

Secondly. The sacrifice of obedience is most grateful to God, because it is most difficult. There is nothing to which man is so much attached as to his own will; to give it up, as he does by obedience, is to renounce himself: there is nothing of which he is so jealous as of his liberty, which seems to make him master of himself and of all creatures, which gives him a dominion over himself so perfect and absolute, that God, even in His omnipotence, respects it, and seems to withdraw His jurisdiction from it. It is only the will of man, says William of Paris, that interferes with God's dominion: and man, by obedience, sacrifices this will and liberty. Faith is called a sacrifice pleasing to God, because by faith man sacrifices to God his understanding and the light of reason by submitting them to the yoke of faith: and is the will of man less noble than his understanding? And can the sacrifice of his will which man makes by obedience be less pleasing to God than that which he makes of his understanding by faith? Furthermore, obedience not only makes us sacrifice our will, but, like faith, makes us sacrifice our reason; for a man who is perfectly obedient

blinds himself, so to speak, by renouncing his own intellect and accepting the guidance of that of his superior. Finally, obedience in sacrificing the will of man to God sacrifices his heart, which is the most difficult and most heroic of all sacrifices, and consequently the most pleasing of all to God; and it would seem as if God says to the obedient man as He did to Abraham: Now I know that thou fearest me and lovest me sincerely, since thou hast been able to resolve to sacrifice to me that which thou cherishest most, in immolating thy only son.

The second motive that ought to urge us to the exercise of obedience is its advantageousness to man. It is certain that our perfection and our happiness consist in doing the will of God: now we are never so sure that we do His will as when we obey those who occupy His place; that is to say—our superiors; supposing of course that they command nothing contrary to the law of God. *Be obedient,* says St. Paul, *to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ . . . as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving as to the Lord and not to men* (Ephes., vi). He repeats the same to the Colossians, and adds that when they obey their masters for God's sake, God Himself will reward them as if they had obeyed Him. And does not our Lord Himself say, when speaking to superiors, he who obeys you obeys me, and he who despises you despises me! Thus it is an article of faith that I obey God and do His will when I obey my superior

(provided that he orders nothing contrary to the law of God), and I am more sure that I do the will of God when it is indicated to me by the voice of a superior than if it were declared to me by the ministry of an angel: yes, we may go further and say, that I am more sure than if it were made known to me by a special revelation from Jesus Christ—for it would not be of faith that an angel or Jesus Christ really addressed me; and thus I might be subject to an illusion in following them: but it is of faith that God speaks to me through my superior in the circumstances we have pointed out, and thus it is as impossible that I should be deceived, as it is impossible for God to deceive me. It was upon this principle that St. Theresa, that prudent and enlightened woman, when Jesus Christ appeared to her and commanded something that seemed contrary to that which her confessor had ordered, obeyed her confessor, saying with equal liberty and respect to our Lord, "Although I know, O God, that it is Thou who speakest to me, and although I have every possible inclination to obey Thee, yet it is not of faith that it is Thou who speakest, but it is of faith that it is God who speaks to me by the mouth of my confessor, because he holds His place." If, then, obedience makes me infallibly do the will of God, does it not make me at once perfect and happy, since the will of God being the rule of all perfection and sanctity, and fountain of all happiness, it can only render me holy and happy in adhering to it? In truth, what makes paradise? It is that there is no other will but God's. And what constitutes the

blessedness of all the saints who reign there? It is that they are inseparably attached to the will of God. Therefore, we may say, that a religious house where obedience is strictly observed is a true paradise on earth.

St. Paul shows us, likewise, how advantageous obedience is to man when he says that as the world was lost by the disobedience of one man (that is Adam, who violated God's commandment to abstain from the forbidden fruit, a commandment to which God had attached his happiness and that of all his posterity), so God wished that the salvation of the world should be procured by the obedience of one man, who was at the same time God. But it is only through our own obedience that we can avail ourselves of the fruit of the obedience of Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine teaches us the greatness of obedience when he says it is the greatest of all virtues, either because it includes all virtues or because they cease to be virtues unless regulated by obedience: and for this reason he calls it the mother and source of all virtues. St. Gregory likewise teaches that obedience implants all virtues in the soul and keeps them there; and St. Thomas, speaking of the vow of obedience, places it above all other vows for two reasons: 1. Because the sacrifice made by obedience is the most excellent that can be made, and because the vow of obedience includes in some way the others. 2. Because it conducts most infallibly and most perfectly to the end proposed in the religious life.

CHAPTER V

Of Means to Acquire the Virtue of Obedience and to Render the Practice of it Easy

ST. IGNATIUS, in that excellent letter on Obedience which he addresses to his children, furnishes us with several methods to facilitate the practice of that virtue.

The *first* method is to labor earnestly to acquire humility; for as the pride of the first man was the source of disobedience, so it is our pride which attaches us to our own will and judgment, and hinders us from obeying. An humble man never trusts too much to his own intellect, and thus it is not hard for him to follow the judgment of others; and this disposition renders it easy for him to obey.

The *second* method is to accustom ourselves, according to the counsel or rather the command of the Apostle, to consider Jesus Christ as being in the person of our superior. This makes our obedience easier and more meritorious: for if we amuse ourselves with reflections on the good or bad qualiities of our superiors, and examine their intentions in commanding us, we shall either obey with pain or without merit, and our obedience will spring either from policy or inclination or necessity; and thus we shall suffer the hardship of obedience without having its merit. Besides, is this the obedience of a Christian or of a good religious? Is it not rather the obedience of a slave?

The *third* method is to consider the command of the superior as the command of God Himself; so that (as in a matter of faith we should fear to reason too much, and should regard the liberty taken to examine the truths which the Church proposes to our belief, as a sort of incredulity) a truly obedient man presses forward with ardor to execute the orders of his superior, without reasoning or examining the reasons that prompted the order, regarding the command of his superior as the command of God Himself.

The *fourth* method is to endeavor by a pious affection both for him who commands and for that which is commanded not to examine nor to combat the reasons which have influenced our superiors, but rather to defend and justify them in our mind and in the minds of others: for by so doing, we shall not only obey without pain, but with positive pleasure.

Book the Fourth

OF THE VIRTUES THAT GOVERN OUR DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOR

TREATISE THE FOURTH

Of Charity towards Our Neighbor

CHAPTER I

On the Nature of Charity towards Our Neighbor, and its Effects

CHARITY towards our neighbor is a virtue by which we love our neighbor for the love of God, so that, according to St. Thomas, love of God and love of our neighbor are one and the same habit, which is the source whence different acts are drawn.

Some of the effects of charity are negative, others are positive. The negative consist in avoiding the faults contrary to charity of which St. Paul speaks in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

Charity, therefore, banishes anger, heart-burnings, enmities, resentment, offensive actions, disobliging words; charity *is not provoked to anger.* Charity banishes the envy which makes us see with pain the happiness or good fortune of others, as if it was a calamity to us. Charity banishes pride which makes us treat others with haughtiness, coldness, and contempt; it *is not puffed up: it is not ambitious,* for it destroys that ambition which urges us to supplant others, and rise upon their ruins. Charity banishes unkind suspicions, rash judgments, disadvantageous interpretations of the intentions of our neighbors: it *thinketh no evil:* it indulges in no secret or malignant joy at the pain or humiliation of others: it *rejoiceth not in iniquity.* Finally, charity banishes an excessive attachment to our own interests by which we are led to think only of ourselves, and to which we often sacrifice even the most essential duties of religion: in a word, *charity seeketh not her own.*

But charity would be imperfect were it confined to these negative effects; it is not enough to abstain from wronging our neighbor, we must also do good to him. Let us then pass from the negative to the positive effects of charity. These effects have for their object the evil and the well-being of our neighbor—that is, to deliver him from the former, and to procure the latter. There are two kinds of evil by which our neighbor may be troubled—the evil of pain and the evil of sin. With these two evils charity occupies itself in a different manner.

Charity, in the first place, endeavors to deliver its

neighbor from all kinds of pain, and for that purpose it warns him of threatening evils, that he may avoid them; it delivers him from those pains which are crushing him; if he cannot be delivered, it solaces and consoles him; if he cannot be consoled, it pities him, and lightens his sufferings by taking part in them through a tender and sincere compassion. Therefore charity weeps with those who weep, after the example of St. Paul, who said that he suffered with all the afflicted. Charity, finally, by making us feel our inability to succor our neighbor as we desire, urges us to have recourse to God, to beg of him the alleviation or consolation of those pains of our neighbors which we cannot remedy ourselves.

But charity is concerned in a different way with the faults and defects of our neighbor. Some of these faults regard God, others ourselves. As to those that regard us, if they proceed from his weakness more than from malice, they are defects rather than faults, and ought to be dissimulated by condescension and borne with patience; for this bearing with the defects of others is one of the principal exercises of Christian charity, as St. Paul teaches: *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ* (Gal., vi). *Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any hath a complaint against another even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you* (Col., iii). But if there are really offenses against us proceeding from malice, we must not only bear them patiently, without resentment or heartburning, but we must forgive them

sincerely, as we wish God to forgive us; we must consider more the offenses against God than against ourselves, and must think of the evil incurred by him who wrongs us, rather than of the pain we suffer.

But if our neighbor's fault only concerns God, charity impels us to endeavor to correct him if we can, and to hide it if that is impossible: it urges us also to pray earnestly to God that He will come to the deliverance of our neighbor. Charity supplicates God to appease His anger, and arrest His vengeance, which overhangs the guilty; and, to deliver the sinner, it consents to share the pain that threatens him; thus making himself a victim of the justice of God that it may make the sinner the object of His mercy, after the example of St. Paul, who wished to be anathema for his brethren; or rather the example of Jesus Christ Himself, who, being without sin, was made, as St. Paul said, the victim of sin. Here we may see the extent and perfection of Christian charity.

But charity is not confined to preventing our neighbor's ills; it exerts itself to do him good in every way; for charity, as St. Paul says, is kind. It obliges us to esteem, honor, and love our neighbor sincerely and affectionately; to testify our esteem by speaking advantageously of him, not by base flattery, but by sincere cordiality. It obliges us to testify our respect for him by treating him in a respectful and civil manner, and our friendship by wishing him every good, and rejoicing in those that he possesses, and by endeavoring to procure for him those which he needs, if it be in our power; by ren-

dering all good offices and services he may require of us, anticipating his requests in all that concerns his salvation, and sparing no effort in his behalf.

CHAPTER II

Of the Rules of Charity which Jesus Christ has Given Us

TO make charity really a virtue it must be governed. In the Canticle of Canticles, the spouse declares that her beloved had regulated charity: *He has set in order charity in me.* Jesus Christ has given us the rules to be observed in regard to this virtue. They are three in number: *first,* to love our neighbor even as we love ourselves (Matt., xxii); *second,* to love our neighbor as we desire to be loved by him, and to treat him as we wish him to treat us (Matt., vii); *third,* to love our neighbor even as Jesus Christ loved us (John, xiii). These are the three rules of charity taught by Jesus Christ Himself. They need only a brief explanation.

The *first* rule of charity is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Now our love for ourselves is marked by two characteristics: it is sincere, and it is tender. To observe this first rule, therefore, our love for our neighbor must possess these same characteristics. *First,* our love for ourselves is sincere; it springs from the depths of our hearts; it is open and undisguised; it is, so to speak, stamped

on our very soul itself; there is nothing superficial about it;—it does not confine itself to appearances, for it is always stronger internally than it outwardly appears to be;—it is not a mere barren sentiment; it does not content itself with words, but acts effectually;—it wishes to communicate this love of itself to all men, that they may love it as cordially as it loves itself, and may wish it the same good that it desires for itself. From this we may see how we must deal with our neighbor, if we would love him as we love ourselves.

Secondly, our love for ourselves is tender, and, therefore, if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we must feel tenderly towards him. Our tenderness for ourselves and all that concerns us produces two effects. The first is to make us extremely sensible of our least evils, so that we think them greater than they really are, and never regard them as trifles. The second is to hide our failings from ourselves, or to persuade ourselves that they are never very great. These are the thoughts inspired by self-love, and they are the same that nature and love enkindle in a mother's breast concerning a beloved child. Now, if charity were accompanied by the same tenderness that we have for ourselves, or that which concerns us nearly, it would inspire the same sentiments in regard to our neighbor, it would make us very sensitive to his misfortunes, however trivial they might be, or rather it would magnify them in our sight, and thus awaken feelings of compassion like those of St. Paul, who loved all his brethren in the bowels of Jesus Christ,

that is, with extreme tenderness,—and was touched by all their sorrows as if he had himself been afflicted. If we consider our hardness towards our neighbor and our insensibility to his troubles, we shall see how far we are from having that tender affection for him which we have for ourselves. The second effect of tenderness for ourselves is to hide from us our faults and those of persons whom we love, or to diminish those faults in our sight. Charity, contrary as it is to self-love, enlightened as it is when it is accompanied by tenderness for our neighbor, blinds us somewhat in regard to his faults. It looks at his actions always with a simple and just eye, and always from the best point of view. If it cannot justify his action, it endeavors to excuse it, or at least to excuse his intention. As St. Bernard says: *If thou canst not excuse the act, excuse the intention.* Finally, if the malice of the act is apparent, so that the intention cannot be excused, charity regards the fault with tender compassion, and bears with it patiently, and thenceforward condemns itself to silence concerning it. Behold how natural tenderness obliges us to treat those who are connected with us;—behold how our tenderness for ourselves makes us wish to be treated by them;—and behold, too, how charity for our brethren, if it is as tender as our charity towards ourselves, obliges us to treat them!

The *second* rule of charity given us by Jesus Christ is to love our neighbor as we wish him to love us, and to treat him in the same manner as we wish him to treat us. This divine rule appeared so

admirable and reasonable to an enlightened heathen prince, that he considered it a convincing proof of the truth of the religion which enjoined it. We have only to keep this rule and we shall be just and holy: we have only to take the law of our self-love, inordinate as it may be; we have only to follow its movements in the way we have commended above, and it will compel us to do justice to our brethren. Let us then consult our own heart and its movements in all that concerns ourselves; let us ask ourselves frequently when brought in contact with our neighbors, "Should I wish to be used thus by him—should I wish him to treat me with rudeness or severity,—to address me contemptuously, to slander me or rail at me maliciously, to turn me to ridicule, to exaggerate my lightest faults, to misrepresent my most innocent actions, to misinterpret my best intentions, to judge of my conduct harshly upon the merest appearances, to have no patience with my failings and no consideration for my weakness,—or finally, should I wish him never to forgive me anything, nor treat me with tenderness? Should I not wish rather to be treated by him in a manner exactly the reverse of this? Why then do I not remember this in my treatment of others, since our Lord's second rule of charity is to do to others as we wish them to do to us?

Our Saviour's *third* rule of charity is to love our neighbor even as Jesus Christ loved us. This sublime rule, the practice of which leads to the most eminent perfection, is the new commandment, as our blessed Lord says: *A new commandment I give*

unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you (John, xiii). He calls it new because it was unknown before He brought it into the world. As God alone could have taught so sublime a doctrine, so He only could set us the example of it; and it is only by the help of His grace that we can hope to be able to follow it. But let us examine this rule, and see whither it will lead us. How has Jesus Christ loved us? *First,* He has loved us without any right on our side: *secondly,* He has loved us without interest on His own part: *thirdly,* He has loved us, in some measure, more than Himself. He has loved us without our having any right to claim His love: for He has considered us either in the nothingness of our nature, and that which is nothing cannot be loved; or He has considered us in the nothingness of grace, that is in sin, either in the original taint which we have inherited, or in the actual sin which we have committed; and in this view we not only were not worthy of His love, but we merited His hatred. And, as St. Bernard says: *We should never have had the blessedness of being counted among His friends, had He not loved us while we were His enemies.* In the second place, He has loved us without any self-interest; for God has no need of our love or of our goods: if we do not love Him all the loss is our own: neither His majesty nor His happiness is diminished by it,—and lastly, He has loved us more than Himself; since He has sacrificed His rest, His glory, His pleasure, His life, His blood even to its last drop—and all for us: *Sic dilexit.* Here we see how far our love for our neigh-

bor ought to be carried if we wish to follow His example and keep His new commandment. As God said to Moses, who was to make the ark of the old covenant: *Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the Mount* (Exod., xxv).

First, then, we must love our brethren even when we have no reason for loving them, when we are not attracted by their good qualities, nor propitiated by their benefits, when we have every worldly reason to hate them if we consulted only our human reason and natural feelings, that is to say, when we have been most sorely offended by them. We must draw our only motives for loving them from Jesus Christ and His commandments, and then we shall love like Christians.—*Secondly,* we must love our neighbors without any self-interest, that is, we must have in view only the desire to please our Lord by following His example and obeying His new commandment to love our brethren even as He has loved us.—*Thirdly,* as Jesus Christ loved us, even to the sacrifice of all that was His, so we, to imitate Him perfectly, must be ready, in certain circumstances, as when the salvation of our neighbor is concerned, to sacrifice our goods, our rest, our interest, our glory, and even our life. This is the consequence that St. John draws from the example and command of our Lord concerning charity: *In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

CHAPTER III

Of the First Motive of Charity towards Our Neighbor: the Teachings of Jesus Christ Concerning It.

IN the final discourse of our blessed Saviour before His death, which appears to take the place of His testament, and the expression of His last wishes, in which He shows His disciples the tenderness He had for them—He indicates to them those things which He has most at heart, and He enjoins upon them that they should love one another, by an express command which He repeats no less than three times, to show the earnestness of His feelings in this regard. St. Augustine says that this repetition of the commandment is a commendation of it. *First,* He says simply, I command you to love one another: *secondly,* He says that this is His special commandment, for the observance of which He feels the deepest interest, and in keeping which we should testify most clearly our love of Him. He declares that it is not only His commandment, but a new commandment, inasmuch as it breathes the spirit of the new law, which is a law of love. And He wishes to give us to understand that it is new, both in the affection which it exacts and the new circumstances which attend it, as well as in the perfection to which He desires us to be raised by it; which is to love our brethren as Jesus Christ loved us—that is, without any claims to our love on their part, without

any interested motives on our own, and even to the sacrifice, if need be, of our dearest interests and our life. *Finally,* He says that it is chiefly by our fidelity in observing His commandment of charity, that we shall be known to possess His spirit, and to be His disciples (John, xiii), that is, real Christians. As if He had wished to say, as St. Augustine suggests, that His disciples would not be distinguished by the power they possessed of casting out devils, of raising the dead, and working all kinds of miracles, nor by their remarkable gifts of language and prophecy; because others besides His true followers would be able to work similar wonders—but they should be known unmistakably by the love they had for one another. Indeed, our Lord declares that at the day of Judgment many shall say to Him, "Lord, have we not prophesied, and cast out devils, and wrought many miracles in Thy name?" and that He will be obliged to answer that He knows them not (Matt., vii). And why will He not recognize them? Because they are not marked with that character which distinguishes His faithful ones—because they have not charity. Furthermore, to give us a still higher idea of the excellence of charity towards our neighbor, Jesus Christ compares the command by which He enjoins the practice of that virtue, to the command to love God, and says that it is similar to that commandment. In His instructions to His disciples at the Last Supper, He beseeches His Father three times that His disciples may be knit together by a sincere charity, and that they may express as far as possible by their union, His one-

ness of nature with His Father; and He gives us to understand that this charity among His disciples will be one of the most powerful motives to induce the world to believe in Him. Finally, He declares that He will count whatever is done to the least of His disciples to be the same as if done to Himself, and instructs us concerning our duties to our neighbor by that touching parable of the good Samaritan, whose example He commands us to imitate.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Second Motive of Charity towards Our Neighbor

OUR LORD animates us so powerfully to charity for our neighbor, by His example, that we may say that all His actions were examples of His charity towards mankind;—that there is not a single one of them which did not spring from charity. It was charity alone that prompted Him to become man, to be born in a stable, to live thirty years in an artisan's shop, to converse with men, to labor, to preach, to suffer, and finally to die.

Charity towards our neighbor is seen particularly in five things: I. In bearing with the failings of others; II. In having compassion on their misery; III. In solacing them; IV. In doing good to everybody; V. In loving even our enemies, and pardoning their offenses against us. Now let us see how Jesus Christ has practiced charity in all these cases.

First. Our blessed Lord bore patiently with the

defects of three different classes of people—His disciples, the people of the world, and the Pharisees. It seems almost as if He chose poor, uneducated, and faulty men to be His disciples, in order that He might have frequent opportunities to exercise His charity and patience. What must He not have had to suffer from their grossness and rudeness! How frequently must He have been offended! When they so often misunderstood His admirable teachings, with what care did He not adapt Himself to their comprehension by His parables! Although they profited so little from the bright example of His virtues, yet He never rebuked them—He never treated them with harshness—He never showed any sign of impatience or chagrin—He never tired of instructing them and of repeating to them the same great but unappreciated truths. Although from time to time they appeared to doubt His divinity, which He had made clear to them by so many miracles, He never ceased to use His power in their favor. With what charity and condescension did He not bear with the indiscreet zeal of St. Peter, the ambition of the sons of Zebedee, and the incredulity of St. Thomas!

What, likewise, had not our blessed Lord to suffer from the importunity of the people? They pressed upon Him with rudeness and violence; they remained with Him day after day, so that, as St. Mark says, they did not give Him time to eat. Did He ever show, by the least word or sign, that their indiscreet zeal wore upon Him? Did He ever rebuke them for it?

And, then, as to the Pharisees, how often did they tempt Him with their snares! How many times did they not try to surprise Him with their insidious questions? Yet with what mildness, and wisdom, and skill did He not answer them! He never tried to avoid their artifices. If He appears sometimes to have borne down upon them with earnestness, it was only through charity for them, that He might induce them to enter into themselves, and that He might cure their blindness, and withdraw them from their hypocrisy.

Secondly. Charity appears in compassion for the misery of others; and the charity of the Son of God is conspicuous in this regard. What compassion did He not show for the poor people who had followed Him into the desert, so engrossed by the desire to hear the word of God that they had neglected to provide themselves with food! *I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with me now three days, and have not what to eat* (Matt., xvi). How were His feelings of compassion touched to see a great people lacking instruction, and like sheep without a shepherd! Did not His tears show how deeply He felt the sorrow of Mary and Martha? Did He not weep over the misfortunes of ungrateful Jesusalem?

Thirdly. The compassion of Jesus Christ was not a mere sterile sentiment: He pitied the miserable in all their ills and necessities, whether temporal or spiritual, only that He might solace them. As regards temporal wants, although the hour set by His Father for him to commence His

miracles was not come, yet, touched by the embarrassment to which the spouses of Cana would be subjected by the failure of wine for their guests, He wrought an astonishing miracle to provide it, by changing water into wine. Twice He multiplied the bread to relieve the wants of those poor people who, forgetting themselves and their subsistence, thought only of nourishing their souls by listening to the word of God. Did He not work another wonder in favor of His disciples, when He saw that they had been toiling all night at their trade, and had taken no fish, when, by a single word, He filled their nets, even to breaking? Did any miserable person ask His aid, and He refuse it? What sick person ever appealed to Him without being cured? But it was in spiritual needs that His charity shone most brightly. Did He not say that He had not come for the righteous, but for sinners; that it was not those who were well, but the sick, who had need of a physician? Did He not show His tender charity for sinners in the parable of the good shepherd and his zeal in seeking the lost sheep? Did He not Himself fully illustrate this parable by His compassion, goodness, and tenderness towards sinners; finding them out with earnestness, receiving them kindly, and often conversing and eating with them? Did He not make a publican, one of His Apostles, in the person of St. Matthew! Notwithstanding His hatred of impurity, did He not, with much labor and fatigue, seek for the Samaritan woman, and treat her with kindness, accommodating Himself to her weakness with wonderful condescension, and instruct her with so much

wisdom and zeal as to make a fervent apostle of an abandoned woman? What a tender charity did He not show towards the woman taken in adultery and St. Mary Magdalene the sinner!

Fourthly. As charity makes no exceptions, but does good to all men indiscriminately, so St. Peter assures us that our blessed Saviour, like the sun, which sheds its light and heat everywhere, passed through cities and villages only to scatter on every side His graces and good gifts, to console the afflicted, to teach the ignorant, and to cure the sick: *He went about doing good and healing* (Acts, x).

Finally. If the perfection of charity consist in the pardon of injuries and in love for our enemies—here we behold the triumph of the charity of Jesus Christ. God alone could give us such examples of this virtue. Not only did He pardon His enemies, but He prayed for them, and found in interceding for them a means to palliate their frightful crime. Lastly, He carried His charity so far as to die for those who put Him to death, and shed the last drop of His blood for the salvation of those who were slaying Him with such unheard-of cruelty.

Concerning the examples of His charity, it seems as if we might use the words of our blessed Lord Himself upon His example of humility in washing the feet of His Apostles: *For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you so do you also* (John, xiii). If I have borne witness to my love by the examples of charity I have given you, you cannot better show me yours than by imitating them.—Indeed, the example of Jesus Christ is the

most powerful motive to the observance of His commandment of charity towards our neighbor, and it is thus used more frequently by the Apostles. *My dearest,* says St. John, who may be called the apostle of charity,—*if God hath so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* And St. Paul, writing to the Romans: *Now we that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; for Jesus Christ did not please Himself.* And in his Epistle to the Ephesians the same Apostle uses this beautiful language: *Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children, and walk in love as Christ hath also loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness.*

CHAPTER V

Other Motives to Prompt Us to Love Our Neighbor

FIRST. Our reason impels us to observe this great commandment of charity: for we ought to love our neighbor because he is created after the image of God like ourselves; and thus the same motive which obliges us to love God, obliges us likewise to love all that is related to Him or bears His likeness. We ought to love our neighbor because he is of the same nature as ourselves, and like naturally loves like; and we ought to love him because, like us, he was redeemed by the precious

blood of Christ, was regenerated by the same Baptism we were, and became thereby with us a member of Christ and a child of God. If we have the same Father, are we not truly brethren? and can one brother refuse to love another? The prophet Malachias uses the same reason to animate the Israelites to charity: *Have we not all one father! hath not one God created us! Why then doth every one of us despise his brother?* Furthermore, we ought to love our neighbor because he participates in the same sacrament with ourselves, and is fed with the same flesh of Jesus Christ, in the divine Eucharist, which is a sacrament of union, uniting us all most closely and intimately to Jesus Christ as to our chief, and which ought to unite us all in the bonds of a sincere charity. St. Paul adduces this motive in addressing the Corinthians: *For we being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread.* Likewise St. Augustine calls the sacrament of the Eucharist a sacrament of union, or rather of unity: *sacramentum unitatis.* We ought to love our neighbor because he is striving by the same means that we are, to attain the same end—eternal happiness. Now is it possible for us to hate our brethren when we reflect that we are created and predestined to love each other for all eternity, as we are obliged to believe?

Secondly. Our own interest ought to urge us to keep the commandment of charity; because: I. The observance of this law would make the earth a paradise and all men blessed. If this commandment were completely obeyed, we should have as

many friends as there are men on earth. That God should have given such a command as this to all men, is a great proof of His love for us. II. The observance of this law renders the observance of all others very easy—or we might better say, that it includes the observance of all the rest. St. Paul teaches this when he says that *he who loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law* (Rom., xiii): *for Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal,* etc.; *and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law.* III. Nothing would be more consoling to us than to know with certainty that we love God: now the most certain and sensible mark of our love for God is, according to St. John, our love for our neighbor: *If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us* (1 John, iv). IV. Our love for our neighbor is not only sensible proof of our love for God, but it is a certain pledge and warrant of predestination. *In this,* says St. John, *the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever is not just is not of God, nor he that loveth not his neighbor. We know,* he adds, *that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death* (*ibid.*, iii). Finally, we are so entirely unable to show, in an efficacious manner, our gratitude towards God by rendering Him our services, since He has no need of our goods,—that it is a great consolation to be able to serve Him in the person of our neighbor. For if He requires not

our goods in His own person, He does in the person of our brethren who are His members and His brethren: and He assures us that He regards the good we do to them as if it were done to Himself: *Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me* (Matt., xxv).

CHAPTER VI

Of the Means to Acquire and Preserve Fraternal Charity

THE *first* means to acquire and preserve charity is to accustom ourselves to consider Jesus Christ in the person of our neighbor: and this is not difficult to any one who will believe that Jesus Christ is in our neighbor as truly as He is in the Holy Eucharist, only in an entirely different manner. For He who has said, *This is my body,* assures us, as we read in the conclusion of the last chapter, that it is to Him that all our good or evil is really done, and that the good we refuse to our neighbor we refuse to Him. If Jesus Christ were to ask a kindness of us, would it be hard for us to grant it? Yet it is He who speaks by the mouth of our brother. If He ask alms, can we be stony-hearted enough to refuse? But it is of faith that it is He who speaks in the person of the poor man. If He were to present Himself to us, should we dare to treat Him with harshness or contempt, or to injure Him? Yet He assures us that all the unkindness we

inflict upon our brethren falls upon Him. Whoever touches you, He says, not only touches Me, but touches Me in the very pupil of the eye.

The *second* means to acquire and preserve, or at least to avoid wounding, charity, is never to lose sight of that admirable rule which our Lord has given us, never to do anything to others which we should not wish them to do to us. As this rule is conformable to right reason and natural equity, nothing is easier to a man ordinarily reasonable and upright, although he may not have great virtue, than to follow this rule; but if it were followed fully in all our daily intercourse with others, how many faults would be avoided; how delightful would society become!

The *third* means to acquire and preserve charity, is not only never to overlook one's own faults in this regard, but also to endeavor to make reparation for them as soon as possible: thus, if we have used a severe and displeasing expression, we must, as soon as we have reflected on it, either ask pardon for it, or make reparation for it by some expression of kindliness. If we have been disobliging to any one, we must try to make up for our fault by doing some good office to that person on the first occasion that offers itself. If we have wounded charity by slander, we must make reparation as soon as possible by retracting what we have said; and if that be impossible, by some other efficacious means.

The *fourth* means is never to allow an occasion of exercising charity to pass unused, remembering that St. Paul calls charity a kind of debt, but a debt

(as St. Augustine says) which one is always paying, but of which he can never be entirely acquitted: and thus, following the beautiful thought of the old heathen emperor, we ought to consider that the day in which we have done no good to any one—in which we have not exercised charity, is a day that we have lost. *Nemini benefeci, diem perdidi.*

TREATISE THE FIFTH

Of Meekness

CHAPTER I

Of the Nature and Degrees of Meekness

MEEKNESS is a virtue which has for its object to repress or to govern anger: it represses anger when that passion is excited without reason or contrary to reason; for, as the author of all good has given anger to man as a kind of arm for his defense, to repel any evil that menaces him, it is the part of meekness to restrain it lest it pass the bounds set to it by nature and reason, and become unjust.

But, as anger is not always unjust, but on the contrary, is often most just and useful to man, where it is held in proper check, and only rises for that purpose for which God gave it to man—it is to meekness that we must look for rules for its proper government. Anger is a movement excited in the soul to repel an evil which threatens or offends us. If this evil offends us because it is offensive to our reason, the emotion is called indignation, and it is

just: if the evil offends us because it attacks and offends God, the movement is called zeal, and it is most holy. But if it offends us merely because it is ourselves who are attacked—because our own self-love is wounded, the movement is called resentment, animosity, desire of vengeance—and, ordinarily speaking, it is disorderly and unjust.

It is the part of meekness to govern these three movements of anger, and it achieves that end in three different ways. Meekness governs the first movement, so that indignation may not degenerate into bitterness or spite: it moderates the second, so that zeal may not destroy discretion: and it stifles the third entirely, because it is irregular.

First. As the movement of anger called indignation is excited only against an evil that offends our reason, meekness governs this movement, hindering it from becoming too severe, and making it support reason;—not, however, that it is supposed to go before reason, for reason ought always to control and direct it. And as the mind has much more to do with this movement than the heart, if the mind sometimes permits the heart to be moved also, meekness prevents its being too much moved, or being too deeply touched. If reason obliges the heart to disapprove unreasonable conduct and to blame certain faults, meekness makes it spare the person of the offender, and mingles some feeling of compassion with its indignation. While anger, guided by reason, prompts us to reproach others with their faults, meekness prevents our reproaches being too sharp or offensive—so that our anger seems to pro-

ceed from a right-mindedness which cannot approve the wrong, rather than from a spirit of chagrin which can neither suffer nor conceal anything.

Secondly. Meekness moderates zeal so that it may not be carried away into indiscretion, or become bitter through excess of ardor. But while meekness banishes all bitterness from zeal, it preserves to it all its force. And in the necessity which sometimes exists, of vigorously reprehending faults, and even of correcting them by punishment, meekness so softens its reprimands as to make the blameworthy feel that it is his fault and not himself that deserves reproach, and that it is the intention to correct him rather than to mortify or injure him. And if one is sometimes obliged to inflict punishment, meekness makes us always regret the necessity, and prevents the punishment from being too great for the fault; so that the offender is obliged to acknowledge that the pain he suffers is rather the effect of a sincere zeal and tender compassionate charity, than of a blind or hasty passion. Furthermore, meekness sometimes restrains zeal in such a manner that it seems to stop its course entirely, by obliging it to keep silence, to conceal itself, to tolerate offenses; or at least to tolerate offenders, when it sees that they are not disposed to profit by correction, or that passion is too lively to be repressed, or that remedies would rather tend to irritate than to heal the wound; and then meekness waits until passion has cooled down, and the heart of the guilty has become calm, and is more disposed to receive correction and to profit by it.

Finally. Meekness represses entirely that movement in our mind, which is excited by an attack upon our person, by an affront to our dignity,—by stifling in us all resentment and all desire of revenge. And not only does it do this, but it does not even suffer the heart to conceive a feeling of aversion or coldness, or to utter the least expression of dislike towards him who has offended us, nor to give expression to its resentment by any reproach.

CHAPTER II

Of the First Motive of Meekness; the Teachings of Jesus Christ Concerning It

ALTHOUGH our blessed Lord taught us all virtues by His precept and His example, yet He says that humility and meekness are the two virtues we must particularly learn from Him: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt., xi). Observe also that meekness is the subject of the second beatitude, humility being the first; as if to indicate that these two virtues are the foundation of the evangelical teaching, and that they contain the spirit of Christianity. Our Lord tells us that whoever is angry with his brother deserves to be condemned by the judgment; that whosoever shall speak contemptuously to his brother shall merit the condemnation of the council; but that he who calls his brother a fool shall be worthy the fire of hell (Matt., v). He counsels His disciples never

to defend themselves from one injury by the infliction of another; to present the left cheek to him who shall have struck the right, rather than to take revenge; and to give up their cloak also to him who wishes to take their coat, rather than to have any contention with him. *You have heard,* He adds, *that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust* (*ibid.*). He teaches us that we must not confine our love to those who love us, for the publicans do as much as this; that this is not true Christianity, and that he who acts thus cannot expect the heavenly reward.

Jesus Christ wishes us also, when we are about to offer our gift upon the altar, and remember that our brother has anything against us, that we should leave the altar to reconcile ourselves with him. He says we must pardon our enemies if we wish God to pardon us; and that He will treat us exactly as we treat our brethren. Finally, He taught us to pray that our sins might be forgiven, but He adds this condition, as we forgive the offenses of our brethren: and, as if fearing that He might not have been understood or that His disciples would lack courage to follow His instructions, He explained them by comparisons and parables: and He teaches us how rigorously He will treat those who do not

obey His commands in this respect, by the example of that merciless servant who would not allow time to one of his companions who owed him a debt, and that, too, after his master had remitted to him a much larger debt; by which he merited to have the favor granted by his master revoked, to be given up to the officers of the law, and compelled to pay in full all that he owed. *So also,* says our blessed Saviour, *shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.*

CHAPTER III

Of the Second Motive of Meekness: The Example of Jesus Christ

ALTHOUGH Jesus Christ has given us shining examples of every virtue, yet it is this virtue of meekness that He has illustrated by the most numerous and most conspicuous examples. It seems as if He wished to show that it was nearest His heart, that it was the peculiar characteristic of His spirit, and that He desired us, by imitating Him in this respect, to prove our love for Him. So, too, the prophet Isaias, in setting forth the character of the coming Messias, and enumerating the marks by which He might be known, does not mention the beauty of His teachings, nor the greatness of His sanctity, nor the splendor of His miracles: he dwells only upon the charms of His meekness: *He shall not cry, nor have respect to persons, neither*

shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth (Isaias, xlii).

Notwithstanding that our blessed Lord lived continually with the gross and ignorant, whom He had chosen for His disciples, and who must often have tried His patience by their rudeness, yet when was He ever found wanting in meekness towards them? With what condescension did He not accommodate Himself to their weakness! With what kindness did He not enlighten their ignorance! With what patience did He not bear with their faults! If sometimes He was compelled to reprehend them, was it not always done with kindness and meekness? Although they were sometimes so slow to understand His teachings even when illustrated by parables; and although they profited so little by His instructions or His great examples, yet did He ever appear mortified at this; did He ever rebuke them harshly, or remit His efforts to enlighten them?

What had Jesus Christ not to suffer, either from the indiscreet zeal of His disciples, as when some of them wished Him to resent the incivility of a certain city, by calling down fire from heaven upon it, or from the importunity of the people, sometimes tiring Him with useless questions or extravagant demands; at one time pressing about Him from mere curiosity, and at another following Him everywhere so closely as to give Him no time to take either food or repose? Yet, in the midst of all this, did He ever forget for a moment His wonted gentleness?

Did He ever betray the least sign of impatience, of chagrin, or of fatigue? The Pharisees, too, put His patience and meekness to a severe test by the snares which they laid for Him, by their insidious questions, by their insults, and by the dreadful calumnies they circulated against Him. When they attacked His person only, He always treated them with marked moderation and gentleness; and even when He was obliged to reprehend with zeal and vigor their hypocrisy, that He might keep the people from being misled by them, He was careful not to injure them or their authority, for He enjoined belief in their doctrines and submission to their commands.

Although He had an infinite horror of sin, He had no less charity and gentleness for sinners. Did He ever rebuke a single one? Did He not seek them out with earnestness? Did He not welcome them with kindness? The more miserable they were, the more He appeared to love them; and the greatness of their misdeeds, so far from disgusting Him, only seemed to increase His compassion. Did He ever treat the greatest sinners ill? Did He not receive them kindly, converse with them familiarly, and often eat with them? And when the Pharisees reproached Him with this, so far was He from wishing to clear Himself, that He declared before the people that He had come rather for sinners than for the just, inasmuch as it was the sick and not the healthy who needed a physician.

It is certain that our blessed Saviour had a special horror of the sin of impurity, but even that did not lead Him to rebuke harshly St. Mary,

Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, and the woman taken in adultery. It was His gentleness which attracted the Magdalene; it was this same meekness that achieved the conquest of her poor sinful heart, when she saw herself received so favorably by the God of mercy, and heard from His sacred lips her eulogium instead of the reproaches which she felt to be her due. Think, too, of His astonishing condescension for the Samaritan woman, miserable and devoid of virtue as she was: did He not disclose Himself to her as He had done to few other people in the world, by declaring Himself to be the Messias? With what kindness and gentleness did He not treat the woman who was taken in adultery? What address did He use to withdraw her from the severity of the law and the accusations of the Pharisees, and to deliver her from the death she had merited, preferring to be accused by the Pharisees of a lack of zeal for the old law, rather than to be found deficient in charity and gentleness toward a poor sinner! Did He not at once pardon her crime without reproaching her, contenting Himself with exhorting her to sin no more?

But the meekness and patience of Jesus Christ shine nowhere so conspicuously as in His Passion: during its long and painful course He never uttered but a single complaint, and that seems to have been intended to let us know that He was not insensible to the terrors of His situation, and to show His moderation and meekness more clearly. He never displayed the least bitterness of feeling, nor the slightest resentment against accusations so unjust, and

calumnies so atrocious, nor did He resist any of those bloody outrages and torments which were heaped upon Him;—He astonished all by His silence, and wore out, by His patience and meekness, even the rage of His murderers. Thus, the prophet Isaias, foretelling the meekness and patience of Jesus Christ in His Passion, said that, like a lamb remaining mute in the hands of the shearers, so He would not open His mouth to complain; and St. Peter adds that *when He was reviled, He did not revile: when He suffered He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly.* Finally, He crowned all His previous demonstrations of patience and meekness when, hanging feeble and exhausted of His blood upon the Cross, He found strength in the ardor of His charity and meekness to cry aloud, not demanding to be revenged of His cruel enemies, but supplicating for their pardon, and offering an excuse for their awful crime. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

CHAPTER IV

Of Some Other Motives to Urge Us to the Practice of Meekness

THE possession of the virtue of meekness procures for man three great advantages: it puts him, so to speak, in possession of the heart of God,—it renders him master of the hearts of his fellow-men,—it makes him master of his own heart.

First. Meekness puts man in possession of the heart of God. As God calls Himself so often in Scripture the God of mercy, of patience, and of meekness; *For Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee:*— so does He love tenderly those who are meek and patient, as being like Himself: He regards them as His true children, the participators in all His blessings and the heirs of His heavenly heritage. *Love your enemies;* says our Lord; *do good to them that hate you; that you may become the children of your Father who is in heaven. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God* (Matt., v). With whom did Almighty God ever communicate more familiarly than with Moses, who was, as we read, the meekest of all men on earth? And it was this which insured for him the support of God against Aaron and the others whom he had been led through his meekness seemingly to neglect.

And David believed that he could not better propitiate God and engage Him to sustain his cause and crown him with graces than by reminding Him of the meekness and gentleness he had shown towards his enemies, particularly towards Saul whom he spared when he had a good opportunity to revenge himself. *O Lord, remember David, and all his meekness* (Ps., cxxxi). It seems as if God could refuse nothing to this meek man; for as his meekness renders him in a manner the master of God, so does it likewise make him master of all God's blessings.

Secondly. Meekness makes us masters of the

hearts of our fellow-men. When one can perfectly control his own heart, he easily obtains the mastery over the hearts of others. There is no heart so hard or savage as to be proof against the charms of meekness. The Holy Ghost tells us that a mild answer will disarm the most violent anger. It is much easier to resist zeal, however ardent it may be, than to stand against the charms of meekness.

How often has it taken captive those hearts that had been unmoved by the most earnest zeal! The zeal of our Saviour against the profaners of the Temple troubled and frightened them; but we are not told that any of them were converted by it. His holy zeal against the Pharisees, and the terrible threats He made against them, far from converting them, seem to have had no other effect than to harden them; but the greatest sinners could not resist the power of His gentleness. It was this which gained the hearts of St. Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan, and the adulterous woman. Was there ever a meeker or more gentle man than St. Francis of Sales? All the earnest and eloquent preachers of his time did not convert so many sinners by their fiery zeal as he did by his meekness. It was seldom that he found a sinner hardened enough to withstand that. How can we help being won by a man, who, so far from returning injury for injury, does not utter even a bitter word; who fears even to defend the truth with too much warmth, lest he may wound charity; who does not stand up with obstinacy for his own interests, even though they may be most just; who had rather

lose his worldly possessions than the virtue of gentleness; who gives up his coat to him who wishes to take his cloak, rather than to dispute with him; who knows no revenge except to return good for evil; and who responds to injuries only with kindly offices? This is perfect Christian meekness. Alas, how few perfect Christians there are!

Thirdly. Meekness makes a man master of his own heart: anger and every other violent passion being subjugated by it, he is able to control all his movements. All is obedient within such a man's heart: for he himself obeys reason, and his reason is always perfectly submissive to God. How can an angry man, who is, as people say, out of his mind with rage—how can he see what passes in his mind and regulate his movements? He is the slave of his passions, especially of his anger, and how can he govern and repress them? But a meek and peaceful man is always self-possessed; ever mindful of his movements, nothing escapes him; constantly master of his own heart, he is master of its passions and its movements, and he calms them with ease.

As darkness can best teach us the necessity and utility and beauty of light, so nothing can make us so sensible of the charms and advantages of meekness as the contemplation of the deformity of anger, and the disorders into which it leads its victims.

There is no vice so opposed to reason as anger: a man ceases to be reasonable when he is carried away by it; and when he ceases to be reasonable he is no longer really a man. The other passions dis-

turb reason; anger stifles it, and reduces man to the level of the most ferocious beasts. For this reason the Holy Ghost compares an angry man to a lion, whose strength is exerted only to inflict injury on others. Reason is the curb given us to restrain our passions, and if we throw it away, what is to keep us from being carried into the worst disorders? An angry man is like a vessel without either helmsman or rudder, which is tossed about at the caprice of the tempest, and will, in the end, be dashed in pieces upon the rocks.

Nobody, says St. Augustine, believes his anger to be unjust, notwithstanding he may be the prey of a most unjust passion. Anger is ordinarily unjust in its origin: frequently it is a mere trifle, a word spoken without reflection, an imagination, an unfounded suspicion, an innocent action misinterpreted—which puts a man beyond self-control, and sometimes carries him to the worst extremities.

Anger is unjust in its operation. Can one evil be remedied by another, or rather by the greatest of all evils—sin? Can we correct a light, and sometimes imaginary fault, by a real and grievous one? Is the wrong which we wish to revenge at all proportioned to the wrong we do to our own souls by indulging the desire of vengeance? In yielding to anger, we lose reason, peace, charity, and grace;—now can he, against whom we are enraged, and whom we regard as our enemy—can he ever do us so much evil as we are doing to ourselves by giving way to passion? An angry man is his own greatest

enemy; nobody can injure him so much as he injures himself: he is himself the only worthy object of his own anger.

Finally. Anger is unjust in its consequences; for what sins and frightful disorders does it not cause? The angry man, while under the control of this passion, does not utter a word, nor take a step, nor make a movement which is not sinful. Even when he appears to punish justly, he is unjust in the passionate manner in which he acts, and still more unjust in the disproportion which ordinarily exists between the fault committed and the punishment he inflicts.

A man wished to exterminate the whole Jewish nation, because Mardochai had neglected to salute him! Saul wished to slay all priests, because one of them had not suffered David to perish by hunger! The most trivial causes, a broken glass, a dish improperly placed, an unimportant order neglected or forgotten, will often put a master or mistress of a family beside themselves with rage,—making them forget the patient services of many years, and ruin in a single day the prosperity of a faithful domestic. This is a very ordinary matter; but can anything be more unjust?

CHAPTER V

Of the Defects Opposed to Meekness

First. To cherish resentment against persons whom we believe to have offended us; to talk of them willingly in a spirit of bitterness, to desire to revenge ourselves upon them, and to seek the occasions and the means thereof.

Second. To abandon one's self to choler concerning those who have displeased or affronted us.

Third. To manifest one's resentment either by offensive language or by violent actions.

Fourth. To blame too severely those whose faults we are obliged to correct, or to complain too sharply when we have occasion to be dissatisfied.

Fifth. To look on the faults of others rather with indignation than with pity, and to be little disposed either to accept their excuses or to pardon their shortcomings.

Sixth. To reprehend the failings of others with too much warmth, or with bitterness, or with pride.

Seventh. To punish beyond what the offender deserves; for meekness would always make the punishment less than the offense.

Eighth. To sustain our opinions with too much warmth or stubbornness, and with contempt of those of other people.

Ninth. To treat others uncivilly or with bluntness or haughtiness.

Tenth. To refuse harshly or indifferently those things which we can easily grant.

Eleventh. To fail to express our sorrow when we cannot reasonably accede to the demands of others, and to soften the rigor of refusal by kindliness of manner.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Means to Acquire Meekness

THERE are two kinds of means, as we have already said, by which meekness may be acquired, viz., general and particular. The general means are the same for all virtues, as the thought of God's presence, frequent prayer for the virtue in question, reading, meditation, confession, communion, mortifications; but even these become in a manner particular, by the particular application we each of us make of them to the vice we wish to combat, or to the virtue we wish to acquire. As, for instance, when one wishes to overcome anger and acquire meekness, he takes for his reading some book which treats of that virtue; he makes the maxims and examples of Jesus Christ concerning it the subject of his meditations; he makes it the theme of his ejaculatory prayer; he pays especial attention in his confessions to the faults opposed to it; he makes it his intention in receiving the Holy Communion, and refers to it the greater part of his mortifications and good works.

The particular means to acquire the virtue of meekness are: I. The use of interior acts of this

virtue; and to be efficacious they must be frequent and fervent, and must be applied directly to the destruction of the opposite vice—anger. II. The exercise of exterior acts of this virtue: they give us great facility in the practice of it; and by the violence which we thus do to ourselves we draw down upon ourselves those divine graces so necessary to enable us to triumph over our passions. III. An exact knowledge of the nature of the virtue which we are trying to acquire. IV. A special care to endeavor to foresee, during our morning prayer, the occasions that may arise during the day to tempt us in this respect, that we may be on our guard and thus prevent them. And, lastly, a particular fidelity in making our examination of conscience upon the defects contrary to meekness.

But as we can establish a virtue only by overthrowing the vice opposed to it, so it is only by vanquishing anger that we can obtain possession of meekness. The throne of gentleness can never be established in the soul except upon the ruins of an enemy so powerful. We must, therefore, try to find some remedies for the cure of this evil passion; and as we cannot cure a malady unless we know its cause, let us seek out the causes of anger, that we may apply the proper remedies to them.

Anger is, in some persons, the effect of an ardent temperament, of a quick mind, and an impetuous humor. Its remedy is to be found in applying ourselves seriously to conquer our humor, to tame down and mortify our passions, remembering that virtue does not consist in not having passions, but in being

able to resist and govern them. For he who permits himself to be governed by his humor not only does not act like a Christian, but he loses the chief glory of his manliness. Reason and grace, not passion, should be the rules of a Christian's conduct. It is in this that the spirit of self-renunciation consists, to which our blessed Lord exhorts every Christian. This is that holy violence, without which we cannot win heaven; and all devotion which does not lead to this is nothing but an illusion. To frequent the sacraments, if they do not produce this result in us, is a mere abuse. It was not by being passionless that the saints became what they were, but by the vanquishment of their passions; for the saints have sometimes been those who have had the strongest passions; and it was the violence they were obliged to use against themselves that made them so eminent for their sanctity.

There is no better way to accustom ourselves to conquer our humor and subdue our passions than to make it an invariable rule never to do anything, nor even to speak, when we feel ourselves moved by passion. It is much easier to keep silence than to speak without warmth and sharpness; for, when one is excited, a bitter expression will increase the emotion of the heart, and inflame instead of solacing or calming it, as one imagines it will do; and thus bitterness passes into choler, and choler into uncontrollable rage. When one is obliged to reprimand another for a fault, he ought to repress his anger as far as possible, or to suspend his correction. Our own heart must be calm before it is in a con-

dition to govern the hearts of others and cure their weaknesses. Passion never cures passion; it augments it. He who wishes to govern others must first learn to govern himself; and he who wishes to lead others out of the difficulties into which passion has plunged them can never do it while he is led astray by passion himself.

Anger most frequently springs from our pride. A vain man believes that he never receives his due from those around him; and the least appearance of disrespect puts him in a rage. Generally speaking, a man is angry only because he is proud. The remedy for anger, when it arises from this source, is to labor zealously to uproot our pride and acquire humility. For this reason, without doubt, our blessed Lord connects humility with meekness, because it is its cause. An humble man is always gentle and moderate: as he believes nothing to be his due, it always seems to him that he receives too much. Filled with contempt for himself, he is persuaded that when he is despised by others he receives only what is justly his, and therefore he does not believe that he has a right to show resentment, nor even to complain. As his humility prompts him always to take the lowest place, he finds nobody to dispute it with him, or to give him a chance to be angry.

Anger sometimes arises from an excessive attachment to certain possessions: we cannot endure to be deprived of them without yielding to anger; and the very fear of losing them puts us in a rage as soon as we see the danger of it. The remedy for this evil is to regulate our desires and moderate our attach-

ments. One is meek and patient as soon as he is inordinately attached to nothing, and he bears the loss of anything that he possesses without too great a love for it, or desires without ardor. Now, as soon as a man is convinced that there is no one of his possessions that can be balanced against meekness and charity, he will see that he loses more than he gains whenever he acquires anything at the expense of these two virtues.

The last remedy is never to pardon the least display of anger in ourselves; our passion cannot go far if we never leave it unpunished. We must impose some penalty upon ourselves, proportionate to our fault, either by asking pardon of those with whom we have been angry if they are our equals or superiors, or if they are inferiors by atoning for our harsh and angry words with expressions of kindness and gentleness; or else by obliging ourselves to give certain alms, or to perform some other penance. No angry spirit can long withstand these remedies if we only use them faithfully.

In conclusion, let me give two pieces of advice: *First:* Do not be discouraged if you do not advance so rapidly as you wish in the conquest of this passion. A little fidelity and persistency will carry you safely through. St. Francis of Sales was unusually quick-tempered and passionate, but he was not turned back by the difficulties he encountered in this combat; that meekness and sweetness of temper which shone so preëminently in him were the fruit of the unceasing labor of eighteen years; and shall we lose courage at the end of a few months?

Secondly: There are vices, such as impurity and intemperance, which can be combated only by flying from them. But there are others in which the enemy must be sought out, if we wish to conquer him entirely; and anger is one of them. Read attentively "The Book of the Spiritual Combat," which teaches us so thoroughly how to subdue our passions, and which was so great an assistance to St. Francis of Sales that he declared that it was in great part to the reading of that admirable book that he owed his victory over his natural temperament.

TREATISE THE SIXTH

Of Patience

CHAPTER I

Of Christian Patience

PATIENCE, St. Thomas teaches, is a virtue which sustains the soul against the emotions of sadness caused naturally by a present evil; —which represses those emotions, or at least moderates them, so that the soul is kept from being crushed by them, or from yielding to anything contrary to reason. It imparts to the soul courage and strength to bear all adversities, whether they come from God or from His creatures, without being disturbed or swerved from the path of duty by them.

All the evils by which man can be afflicted are objects upon which this virtue may be exercised. These may be divided into three classes: I. Those purely external to one's self, such as losses of possessions, of parents, of friends, of relations,—and contempt, slander, and calumny. II. Those that touch us more nearly and regard our body, as sickness, pain, extreme heart or cold, and all other inconveniences. III. Those that regard our interior being, as dark-

ness and derangement of the mind, satiety, fatigue, and dryness in the will, rebellions of our lower nature, interior dejection.

There are three degrees of patience. The *first* consists in enduring evils with considerable evenness of temper, though not without difficulty; without murmuring, though not without some little complaint, which betokens our repugnance to suffering, but not a spirit of revolt against the will of God. In this degree, a man seeks all means of solace, but he would not wish to take those that are unjust: he takes care not to oppose himself to God's will, but he would be very glad if that will could be harmonized with his own: he prays to be delivered from evil with more of natural, unquiet zeal than with true fervor: he never permits himself to be crushed by his misfortunes, but he is much afflicted and disquieted by them; he would not commit a mortal sin to free himself from them, but, through his great desire of deliverance, he exposes himself to the danger of committing venial sins occasionally. This first degree of patience belongs to imperfect Christians, and is absolutely necessary to salvation.

The *second* degree consists in an entire and perfect submission to the will of God in all the evils He may send us. This degree does not prevent our being sensible that they are evils, but it makes us surmount them, and act as if we were not sensible of them. In this degree, a man is afflicted by the loss of his goods, or by the death of a dear friend, but he is none the less resigned; and so far is he from allowing himself to murmur, that he does not even

mourn; or if sometimes his sorrow compels him to mourn, it is that mourning which springs from the confidence and tender affection of a son pouring out the sorrows of his heart into the bosom of a good father, who is God. If he sheds some tears, they proceed from the weakness of nature rather than from any lack of resignation, which always sustains itself by keeping in view the will of God. If some slight movements, apparently contrary to God's will, escape him, it is only that by resisting them his courage may be re-animated. So far from committing the slightest fault to deliver himself from his evils, he would not utter a single word if that were all that were necessary to change the designs of God. But however excellent this degree may be, there is still another and more perfect one.

The *third* degree consists in suffering misfortunes not only with resignation, but with joy and gratitude because that which comes from the hand of God ought never to be regarded by us as an evil. Indeed, misfortunes, by the fact of their proceeding from God, become blessings. We ought to persuade ourselves that nothing but good can come from a God so good; and if He sometimes chastises us, we must remember that His heart guides His hand, and His heart is the heart of a father full of bounty and tender love: therefore we ought not only to submit to His chastisements, but to love them—not only to adore the hand that afflicts us, but to kiss it. It is to this degree of patience that St. James exhorts the faithful to attain, when he says: *My brethren, count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations,*

and it is with the same idea that St. Peter says: *If you partake of the suffering of Christ—if you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honor, glory, and power of God, and that which is His spirit resteth upon you* (1 Pet., iv).

CHAPTER II

Of the First Motive of Patience: The Teaching of Jesus Christ

JESUS CHRIST, in His sermon on the mount, gives in His explanation of the eight beatitudes an abridgment of the doctrine of the Gospel, and He therein exhorts us to suffer not only with patience but with joy the ills that befall us, for He desires us to regard them as blessings. *Blessed,* says He, *are those who mourn—blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice' sake—blessed are ye when they shall revile you and say all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake.* Our Lord also tells His disciples that in their patience they shall possess their souls—that is, that it is not in exemption from sufferings that they ought to seek peace, but rather in a generous patience.

He wishes us to carry our patience so far as to present our left cheek to him who has struck the right. He commands us not only to suffer injuries patiently, but to return good for evil; not only not to hate our enemies, but to love them sincerely, and

to pray for those who calumniate and persecute us; and He adduces as a motive and model of admirable patience, the patience of God, who makes the sun shine and the rain descend upon His greatest enemies, instead of hurling upon them the thunders their crimes have merited. He attributes to their patience the fruit yielded by faithful souls even to a hundred-fold. He condemns to an eternal punishment those who cast aside patience and give themselves up to anger and injurious words. He predicts to His disciples the persecutions that await them, and exhorts them to prepare for them by patience.

CHAPTER III

Of the Second Motive of Patience

TERTULLIAN, speaking of our blessed Saviour, says that He wished to satiate Himself with the pleasure of suffering. In truth, it can be said that His whole life, from the moment of His birth until He expired on the Cross, was a ceaseless exercise of patience. There are four different kinds of ills upon which we may exercise patience, viz., poverty, or the lack of the necessaries of life, bodily pain, mental pain, and reproach and humiliation—and in every one of these particulars was the patience of Jesus Christ tried.

As to poverty, what did He not suffer in the circumstances of His birth? He was born in a stable, open on all sides to the inclemency of the weather,

in the rudest season of the year, sleeping upon straw, without fire, or any of those little comforts and conveniences which are seldom lacking at such a time even among the poorest people. And then too, consider the inconveniences to which His poverty subjected Him during the flight to, and the abode in Egypt, without money for His necessities, and finding but little charity among the idolaters who dwelt there, who, not having faith, could not have true charity. Furthermore, He was obliged during thirty years to gain His livelihood by the sweat of His brow, in the exercise of the lowly calling of St. Joseph.

What had He not to suffer during the three years of His public apostolic life,—without the means of subsistence, without a house to which He could retire, being frequently obliged to sleep in deserts, or on the mountains, and wanting even the most common necessaries of life!

Consider to what a frightful extent the bodily sufferings of our Lord were carried. Immediately after His birth He submitted to the pain of circumcision, which was doubly painful to Him, because He foreknew all that He was to suffer in that tender age, so susceptible to pain and so incapable of bearing it. But His impatience to prove His love for mankind prompted Him to shed His blood in this manner on His advent into the world, as a foreshadowing of the day when He should pour it out, to its last drop, upon the Cross.

But it was in His Passion that His patience was most wonderfully displayed; for it was in that that

His sufferings were carried to the greatest excess. We can judge of the greatness of His sufferings by considering: *first,* His natural sensibility; because, as His temperament was the most perfect, so it was also the most sensible; *secondly,* the multitude of evils in which He was engulfed, not a single part of His body being exempt from pain; not one of His senses but had its own peculiar suffering; *thirdly,* the kind of tortures which He suffered, which were either extraordinary in their character, like the crown of thorns, or were inflicted in an extraordinary manner, by the great number of blows given to Him, so that the last of them fell less upon His body, than upon wounds already inflicted; *fourthly,* the cruelty of His executioners, who, beyond their natural brutality, were urged on by the promises of the enemies of our Lord, and encouraged by the devil, whose agents they were; *fifthly,* His intellectual keenness, which penetrated all the circumstances that augmented His woes, so that nothing escaped Him; *sixthly,* the continuity of His sufferings, which during His Passion knew no cessation, and were not lightened by the slightest solace, or consolation. So that if we examine all the circumstances of His Passion we shall find that no one ever endured so much in so little time; and if it were necessary that He should be man in order to suffer, it was likewise necessary that He should be God to enable Him to suffer so much. For this reason the prophet calls Him the Man of Sorrows.

As to the mental sufferings of Jesus Christ in His Passion, they may be said to have surpassed His

bodily pains as much as His love, which was the source of His interior pains, surpassed the cruelty of His enemies and executioners. The extent of His mental sufferings can be judged of by considering: I. Their source, which was His infinite love towards His Father and mankind, and His zeal for the glory of the one and the salvation of the other; II. Their object, which was not only His own sufferings, which were excessive, but, beyond all that, our sins, with which He was burdened, and which He was obliged to mourn over with a sorrow proportionate to their grievousness, to their multitude, to the infinite light which had shown Him all their deformity, and to His love for His Father, whom He knew to have an infinite hatred for those sins. It was this that made Him say to His disciples that His soul was sorrowful unto death; so that He would have sunk under the weight of sorrow had He not been supported by the strength of His divinity; it was this that made Him show so great a repugnance to His Passion in His prayer to His Father, and a desire to be delivered from drinking of that chalice for which He had longed so ardently; it was this that reduced Him to that terrible agony, and to the sweat of blood; and finally, it was this that overwhelmed Him in His last moments upon the Cross, when He cried out, *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*

As to the humiliation and reproach of the Passion in which our Lord's patience was so wonderfully manifested, we have spoken of them in the treatise of humility, on the examples of that virtue given us by Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord practiced the virtue of patience in every degree. First, He suffered without a murmur or complaint. Of Him the prophet Isaias speaks when he says: *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth* (Isaias, liii). And St. Peter says, that, *when He was reviled, He did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly* (1 Pet., ii). It is indeed inconceivable that He should have endured such violence without ever uttering a complaint: it is true that He asked the soldier who struck Him, why he did so, but this was not by way of complaint; it was to show that His endurance was not the effect of insensibility, but of patience. But Jesus Christ did not rest content with the first degree of patience: He not only suffered without a murmur, but He submitted voluntarily to the most cruel torments, giving Himself wholly up to the will of His enemies, and regarding them as the instruments of His Father's justice. He blamed St. Peter, when, in his hot zeal, he opposed the design of our Lord to suffer death at the hands of His enemies: *Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which my Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?* If He, in the depth of His Passion, prayed to be delivered from the bitter chalice, it was not that He refused to drink of it, but to show how much the sacrifice cost Him, and to impress us with a deeper sense of our obligation to Him; for He added immediately, *nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* For, had He prayed absolutely to be delivered

from the torments of His Passion, His Father was incapable of refusing His petition.

Finally, our blessed Lord carried His patience to the third degree, when He came to love and ardently desire to suffer and die; as He did when He said: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?* We may observe the same spirit in His rebuke of St. Peter when he opposed himself to his Lord's Passion;—He called him Satan, and said that he was a scandal to Him. We may observe it in His frequent mention of the sufferings of His Passion, and even when He was in the midst of His glory upon Thabor, and it may be seen in the ardor with which He went to meet His enemies, and in the power which He gave them over His person, without which they could have done nothing, saying to them: *This is your hour, and the power of darkness.*

CHAPTER IV

Of Some Other Motives of Patience

As there is no virtue more difficult for man to practice than patience, so there is none of which God has given more numerous or more powerful motives. The *first* motive is the view of our sins, and it ought to move a sinner even in his greatest trials. How can a sinner complain of an ill, however great it may be, when he has deserved an eternal ill, a punishment in some measure

infinite? Every evil ought to appear light to such a person: if one of the damned were in the condition about which you murmur so much, he would consider himself happy, comparing his sufferings which he has merited with yours: he would regard your state as a paradise, while you consider it a hell. Undoubtedly this is because you do not realize what hell is, and do not reflect that you have a thousand times merited it, and might be there now, if God had treated you with the same rigor that He has others less ungrateful and criminal than yourself. You fear fasts and vigils, said St. Bernard to a lax religious, but all these things are trivial to him who meditates on eternal flames.

The *second* motive of patience is the thought of paradise and the hope of the reward that awaits us in heaven. *Look upon heaven,* said the mother of the Machabees, *and that view will lighten all your sufferings. For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation,* said St. Paul, *worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* And, however great may be our evils, the sight of the eternal happiness, which is the end of them all, ought to make them light, and to oblige us to say with St. Paul, that however much we may suffer, it is all nothing compared to the recompense that awaits us. It should seem, says St. Augustine, that it is only by an eternity of sufferings that we can merit an eternity of happiness: but as it would be impossible for us ever to attain happiness if our ills were everlasting, we ought to look upon them as brief and trivial, however long and severe they

may be, since through them we obtain a happiness infinite in its greatness and eternal in its duration. It was with this same idea that St. Augustine also said: Let demons persecute me: let my flesh conspire with them to torment me: I compare that which I suffer with that which I hope; that which I suffer will soon terminate; that which I hope will never end.

The *third* motive of patience is the sight of Calvary. Look at your God and Saviour upon Calvary,—compare your sufferings with His, and you will be ashamed of your cowardice. His sufferings are excessive, they are long-continued, they are most unjust: but He complains not, for He reflects that He suffers for you, and that His sufferings will procure your salvation. On the other hand, you are worthy of punishment, therefore your pains are just; they are light if you compare them with His; and if they are violent, they are of short duration: and yet you complain, and are unwilling to suffer for a God who has suffered so much for you. He suffers with joy, and nothing seems to cost Him an effort when He is laboring for you; yet you are unwilling to suffer anything when it is necessary to second His zeal for your salvation. Has Jesus Christ then a greater interest in your salvation, than you yourself have? Will He be less great or happy, because you choose to sink to perdition in spite of all His goodness and His efforts to save you? Will not the whole of the evil come upon you?

The *fourth* motive of patience is derived from the great advantages of suffering. Suffering humil-

iates us, and detaches us from ourselves: for how can we indulge in self-complacency, when we are so miserable? How can we be proud, when we are cast down by pain? Suffering detaches us from the world: for how can we be attached to that which has so perfidiously betrayed us and abandoned us after so many promises? It detaches us from sin; because faith teaches us to regard suffering as the just punishment of sin, and makes us say with the prophet: *We have sinned before the Lord our God —and many evils have cleaved to us* (Baruch, i). Suffering, too, furnishes us an occasion of proving our sincerity towards God: for every other proof is open to suspicion. When we love God even while He afflicts us, we love Him for Himself alone, and not for the sake of the benefits we have received, or are expecting from Him. Suffering is a means of paying all that we owe to the justice of God: and, from such sinners as we are, how great is that debt? Indebted for more than ten thousand talents, we should never be able to discharge the debt if God did not furnish us the means, by sending us sufferings to try our patience. Suffering, finally, furnishes us the means of acquiring many virtues, by giving us occasions of practicing them: for it is impossible to obtain any virtue without practicing it. And how can we practice humility, patience, meekness, charity, mortification, and conformity to the will of God, when we have nothing to suffer? Indeed, sufferings, patiently borne, are the most convincing proofs of the sincerity and solidity of virtue.

The *fifth* motive of patience is that suffering makes us think of our salvation, gives us the means

of obtaining it, and makes us morally certain of it. *First:* it makes us think of our salvation. A man who is satiated with prosperity, or carried away by worldly pleasures, who is, so to speak, drunk with his own good fortune, generally forgets altogether God and the salvation of his soul. Does not experience prove to us the truth of this? Nothing ought to be feared by a Christian so much as an extraordinary prosperity: faith teaches us to regard it as the most dangerous of blessings, because it so often carries the soul to perdition in the forgetfulness caused by it. On the contrary, when adversity comes upon us, when the world persecutes us, how can we love it? How can we esteem or count upon its goods, when experience shows us so clearly their fragility? Our hearts must necessarily be attached to something, and since the world repels us by its falseness, we are disposed naturally to turn to God: we see the vanity and inconstancy of fortune, and we give up all our old ambition, and then we are in a state to think only of our salvation, and fix our hearts upon the ever-living truth.

Secondly: adversity and suffering furnish us the means of obtaining our salvation. To obtain salvation we must expiate the sins we have committed, and keep from committing more; and suffering enables us to do both. Sin, says St. Augustine, must be punished either by an avenging God, or by a penitent man. In our slothfulness if God committed the care of this to us we should be too tender of ourselves. God knows what we can bear and what we need, and He takes the infliction of our penance into His own hands: He sends us sufferings propor-

tionate to our offenses and our strength: we have only to receive them in a spirit of penance, and to submit with resignation, and we become at once perfect penitents, and the justice of God is satisfied. But it is necessary likewise to avoid the sins into which we may fall in future, and we are enabled to do this also by suffering. God sees that our love for this or that creature, innocent in its beginning, is becoming inordinate, and He removes the danger from us by death. He sees that we are abusing our possessions, and He permits us to be deprived of them. He sees that we should make a bad use of health, and He chastens us with sickness: from how many sins does He not keep us by this merciful course!

Finally: suffering gives us a moral assurance of our salvation. If we consult the Scriptures we shall find that among all the marks of predestination, there are few so certain as suffering. *For whom God foreknew,* says St. Paul, *He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His son* (Rom., viii), and above all to Jesus Christ crucified: and what can conform us to Jesus Christ like sufferings? The same Apostle tells us that if we suffer with Jesus Christ, we shall reign with Him; and does not our Lord Himself say that blessed are those that mourn, because they shall be comforted in heaven; and blessed are those who suffer persecution, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven—which is the same as to say that they are almost as certain as if they were already in possession?

The *sixth* motive of patience is the thought that nothing glorifies God more effectually than the

patience of a good man in the midst of sufferings: because his patience manifests the perfections of God, and the heroic virtues of the patient man. It manifests God's perfection; for God's treatment of the good, exercising them by suffering, sets forth in the *first* place His justice. God, we are told by St. Paul, afflicts the just and allows them to be severely persecuted for an example of His just judgments. For if He treats His faithful friends thus, how will He treat His enemies? If He does these things in the green wood, what shall He do in the dry? In the *second* place, God's holiness is manifested in this conduct: for if the purest gold needs to be tried in the furnace of tribulation, how ought iron to be treated? If God wishes that the most virtuous souls should expiate their trivial errors by such severe sufferings, what will He not exact of sinners for their great crimes? In the *third* place, God's wisdom is seen in His conducting the just through suffering to happiness, through humiliation to glory, and making them accomplish the end proposed to them by means that appear so contrary to it. *Lastly,* God's omnipotence appears not only in the use He makes of such feeble instruments for the working out of His great designs, in His procuring His greater glory by these people who are so scorned by the world;—but still more in drawing out of the nothingness in which He seems to have overwhelmed them with reproaches and calamities, the most wonderful miracles of His grace and the most eminent sanctity.

The sufferings of the just set forth their virtues in an admirable manner—particularly their faith,

hope, and charity. How clearly does their faith shine in the midst of their sorrows, when it obliges them to believe that God loves them while He seems to chastise them so severely, that it is through goodness that He afflicts them, and that by their ills He intends to advance their welfare and His own glory! Is there anything that can better show the firmness of the hope of a good man, who, seeing himself afflicted, persecuted, crushed with reproaches, and almost annihilated, hopes against all hope, and puts the most entire confidence in God, even when He seems not only to have abandoned him but to have joined with his enemies and persecutors—as if he wished to say with Job: *Even if He should kill me, yet I will hope in Him!* Finally, what a pure charity does it not show, to love God when He seems only to persecute us, to regard Him as a kind Father and to feel for Him the affection of sons when He seems to treat us as enemies, and not only to respect and adore but even to love the hand that seems only to deal out severe chastisements to us!

CHAPTER V

Of the Means to Acquire and to Preserve Patience

THE *first* method is, in the *first* place, to use great exertions to mortify one's passions, particularly that of sadness, which is one of the most dangerous and most difficult to overcome; in the

second place, to moderate one's desires and attachments; for when one desires nothing with an inordinate ardor, or possesses nothing with too much love for it, he can endure the privation and loss of it with but little sorrow.

The *second* method is to accustom ourselves not to consider our misfortunes in themselves alone, for so considered we can see them only as afflictions and sorrows; but, considered in the will of God who sends them, they become not only trivial, but even grateful to us. Evil which comes from the hand of a God, who is full of goodness, ceases to be evil and becomes a positive benefit.

The *third* method is, when we are wronged, not to allow ourselves to think of the persons who have wronged us, for they are often harsh and unjust, and the thought of them would only excite in our hearts anger and hatred; but to think of God who uses the injustice and anger of His creatures to work out in us the designs of His justice and mercy.

The *fourth* method is to keep the crucifix where we shall frequently see it, according to the counsel of the Apostle: *Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;* and we shall draw great examples and motives of patience from the sight of that sacred object. Indeed, with the crucifix before our eyes, how shall we dare to complain of our ills, often so light, seeing a God who is not only innocent, but is sanctity itself, suffering so much without allowing the least murmur to escape Him?

The *fifth* method is to turn our thoughts as much as possible from all objects which can disturb or

afflict us, and fix them upon those which will console us. The greater part of human affairs have almost always two sides, a bright and a dark one: we must look at everything on the bright side, and not exercise our ingenuity in seeking to find occasions of discouragement.

The *sixth* method is to have recourse to prayer, although we feel no attraction to it, and our prayer may lack fervor, imitating the example of Jesus Christ, who finding Himself in that terrible agony in the Garden of Olives prayed constantly, although He found little solace in His prayer: *And being in an agony He prayed the longer.* We must not imitate the despairing slothfulness of those persons, who, as soon as affliction visits them, give up prayer and abandon all their spiritual exercises.

The *seventh* method is to make frequent acts of confidence, abandonment, and conformity to the will of God, although we may feel no fervor and may even feel a positive repugnance to them. We must persuade ourselves that though they are without fervor, they are not therefore without merit; and must say frequently with our blessed Lord: *If it be possible let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.* The Psalms of David are full of expressions of confidence in God and abandonment to His will, which we can use with great profit at such times.

Book the Fifth

OF THE VIRTUES THAT GOVERN OUR DUTIES TOWARDS OURSELVES

TREATISE THE SEVENTH

Of Contempt of the World

CHAPTER I

Of the Nature of Contempt of the World

AS the natural visible world has its elements of which everything contained in it is composed, so likewise the moral world which is opposed to Jesus Christ has three elements (as St. John teaches us), of which everything in it is made. These three elements are pleasures, riches, and honors; and the love of these three things is what we call the spirit of the world; and those who are inordinately attached to them are called the world—the world opposed to Jesus Christ—the world reprobated by God. *For all that is in the world,* says St. John, *is the concupiscence of the flesh,* which is the

love of sensual pleasures; *and the concupiscence of the eyes,* which is the love of riches and of earthly goods; *and the pride of life,* which is the love of honors, and of worldly greatness, and the desire of worldly glory, and the good opinion of men.

Now there are four degrees of contempt of the world.

The *first* degree finds its dwelling in the mind, and consists in not caring particularly about earthly goods and not esteeming them, through a sense of their baseness, their vanity and their frailty, of the sins to which they lead us, and the dangers to which they expose us. Their baseness makes us feel that they are unworthy of a reasonable being, their vanity shows us that they are incapable of contenting our hearts, and their frailty convinces us that no lasting happiness can be obtained from them, since they must end with our life.

The *second* degree concerns the heart, and consists in detaching it from the world. There are many persons who do not appear to esteem the world, who do not allow themselves to be attached to it, and who, after having given good instructions to others on the vanity and infidelity of the world, are yet most foolishly prepossessed in its favor, and seem to believe in its promises even while they experience its treachery and complain of its perfidy. To esteem the world highly is to lack knowledge; but to despise it and yet remain attached to it, is to lack reason—it is to contradict one's own convictions: yet it is constantly done by many who pride themselves on their wisdom.

The *third* degree consists not only in being detached from the world, but in being dead to the world; this ought to be the disposition of every true Christian, as St. Paul says, speaking to all Christians: *For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God* (Col., iii). Even when one is detached from pleasures, wealth, and honors, he may still remain sensible to them and be touched by them: although he may not seek after pleasure, he still feels it when he happens to fall in with it, and thus he is in danger of being captivated by it. But he who is dead, is insensible to all things. His body may be mutilated, or placed on a splendid couch, or in a tomb,—he may be overwhelmed with curses, or eulogized to the skies,—it is all the same to him, because he is insensible to it all: nothing can touch him further. Now this is the picture of a man dead to the world. He may meet with the greatest worldly success; his virtue, his zeal, his talents, the grand results with which God blesses his labors, the miracles which he may have wrought, may attract the esteem, praise, and veneration of mankind;—he may be considered an apostle or a saint—yet he is no more moved by it than if it did not concern him, because he is dead to the world; and contempt, honor, success, persecution, applause, malediction, are all the same to him, because he is insensible to all.

Finally, the *fourth* degree consists in being, like the Apostle, crucified to the world, and in regarding the world as crucified to us: *By whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal., vi). This

degree surpasses in a manner the last, inasmuch as a dead man, being insensible to all things, receives all things alike; but, a man who regards the world as crucified to him is in the same disposition concerning the world and its goods, that men are concerning a man who is attached to a gibbet: they regard him with horror; and so the person who has attained this degree of contempt of the world looks at successes and honors not only with indifference and contempt, but with horror, because he considers that state as one of opposition to our blessed Saviour, and consequently a state of reprobation. It was with this thought that Jesus Christ, who is truth itself, declared that what was great in the sight of men was not only contemptible, but was an abomination in the sight of God.

CHAPTER II

Of the First Motive of Contempt of the World

THE Son of God, in His Gospel, condemns the world in general terms as His greatest enemy. *Woe to the world.* The Gospel is full of maledictions against it, and of threats concerning it. Our Lord declares that the world cannot receive His spirit, having been unwilling to receive Him; that His kingdom is not of this world; that He Himself is not of this world; that the world has not known Him, or if it has known Him, it has been only to hate and persecute Him; that he came into this

corrupt world only to judge and condemn it. And He who prayed even for His murderers, protests that He does not pray for the world (John, xvii).

But our blessed Saviour is not content with this general condemnation of the world, He goes further, and condemns its particular elements, which are pleasures, riches, and honors. He condemns, by His maxims, in the most earnest manner, an excessive attachment to these three things; so that we may almost say that this is the aim of nearly the whole teaching of the Gospel.

As an excessive attachment to the esteem and praise of men and to worldly honors and greatness, is the chief element of the corrupt world—and as this constitutes especially that worldly spirit so opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is a spirit of humility—our blessed Lord brings down upon it the whole weight of His severest condemnation. He warns us not to do our good works before men to be seen and praised by them, for if we do, He says that we shall have no reward from our Father in heaven. *When thou dost an alms deed, sound not a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen, I say to you that they have received their reward. But, when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men; Amen, I say*

to you, they have received their reward. But when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face. That thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. He reproved most severely those two disciples who sought to obtain from Him the two highest places in His kingdom, and told them that they knew not what they asked; and added that in the world those who are in command pass for the greatest and most worthy, but that among them it ought not to be so—that among them he who wished to be the greatest must humble himself to all of them, and that he who wished to be the first of all must first make himself the servant of all. And one day, His disciples, having returned from their labors, puffed up with vanity at their success, told Him that even the demons obeyed them when they commanded them in His name. Then, to humble their self-complacency, He told them that He saw Satan falling, by reason of his pride in his own perfections, like lightning from heaven, and added that the authority over demons and the power to work miracles that He had given them, ought not to be the occasion of their joy, but the fact that their names are written in heaven. Finally, He tells His

disciples that that which is high and noble in the sight of men, is an abomination before God.

Now would it have been possible for the Son of God to have commended contempt of the world more strongly, or to have shown us more clearly that we ought to have not merely contempt for, but an utter horror of the esteem and vain applause of men?

As to riches and all worldly goods, which are the second element of the corrupt world, and which St. John calls the lust of the eyes, because they dazzle the eyes by their deceitful brilliancy, and in that way excite desire of them in the heart,—our blessed Saviour condemns attachment to them in the most earnest manner in many places of the Gospel. *Wo to you that are rich: for you have your consolation. Wo to you that are filled* (Luke, vi). He declares that it is not less difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle: because it is impossible for one who is inordinately attached to worldly goods to be saved; and it is very difficult to own great possessions without being too much attached to them. Finally, He tells us of the miserable end of the rich man, to teach us the common results of an inordinate love of earthly goods.

As to pleasures, and above all, sensual pleasures, and the love of them, Jesus Christ condemns them wherever He speaks of the necessity of mortification, that is to say, throughout the whole Gospel. *Wo to you that are filled: for you shall hunger. Wo to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep* (Luke, vi).

CHAPTER III

Of the Second Motive of Contempt of the World

OUR blessed Lord from His very birth began to teach us contempt of the world by His own example, having wished to hide His miracles and the glory of His coming on earth in the obscurity of a stable and the darkness of the night, and choosing out of all Judea only a few poor shepherds to be the witnesses of it. He might have spent a large part of the first thirty years of His life in traversing the world, astonishing and converting it by the splendor of His miracles and the beauty and force of His divine teachings,—but instead of that, He passed the whole of that time in obscurity (and, it would seem to *human judgment,* in uselessness)—working at the trade of St. Joseph, rendering to him all those menial services that the children of the poor render to their parents—unknown to some and despised by others who seemed to know Him, and even by His relations, who not only did not believe in Him, but treated Him as if He lacked reason.

And then, too, when He had appeared before the world; when He had been baptized by St. John, and declared by the Precursor to be truly the Lamb of God that was to come to blot out the sin of the world, the veritable Messias; when, too, the testimony of St. John had been confirmed by a voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, which appeared visibly upon His head in the form of a dove; would

it not have seemed as if He ought to have improved that opportunity to enter into the world with applause, that He might attract it to Himself, and give some degree of worldly splendor to His mission? But so far was He from pursuing this course, that to get rid of the multitude of people who would fain have followed Him, He retired for forty days into the desert.

Furthermore, when He decided to make Himself known to the world and to preach His Gospel, He chose His disciples not from among the great and learned of the world, but from among poor fishermen—men of humble birth, without knowledge or eloquence. He seldom appeared in Jerusalem or any of the larger towns of Judea, but spent most of His time in the poorer villages and hamlets. He had little intercourse with the great or the learned, but much with the common people, and especially with the poor, to whom He particularly addressed His instructions. The greater part of His miracles were wrought in small and unimportant villages and in favor of the poor; very few were performed in Jerusalem or in favor of the rich. He often forbade those who had been the subjects of His miraculous power and goodness to make His works known. He enjoined silence upon the demon who declared aloud that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He forbade the Apostles, who had been permitted to witness the glory of His transfiguration, to speak of it to any person until after His resurrection. When the people, after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, wished, in their enthusiasm, to make Him a

king, He fled into a remote and mountainous region to escape their honors.

Finally, in His passion, He was entirely despised and forsaken:—Barabbas was preferred to Him,—He was nailed to a cross between two thieves, at noonday, in sight of all Jerusalem, in a conspicuous place, during the great feast of the year, when many persons visited the city, so that His ignominy was made as public as possible. How would it have been possible for our blessed Lord to have given us greater examples of contempt of the world? We must consider that this contempt of the world is the more admirable in Him for the following reasons: I. That all glory was His due. II. That worldly glory could not injure Him, as He was not susceptible to vanity. III. That it was in some degree necessary to Him, since in giving Him a greater reputation among men, it would increase His opportunities of obtaining their salvation. But, notwithstanding all this,—because He was to be our model, and because He knew how deeply this desire of worldly glory and the esteem of men was impressed in our hearts, and how dangerous it was to us,—He has exerted Himself thus to give us so many striking examples of a perfect contempt of the world.

CHAPTER IV

Some Other Motives of Contempt of the World

WE need only to know the world to despise it, and to resolve to detach ourselves from it. The world is unjust in its judgments, faithless to its promises, avaricious in its rewards, capricious in all its conduct, fickle and often deceitful in its friendship. Its friendship is acquired at a great expense, retained only by an increasing and tiresome effort, and nothing is more easily lost. It amuses us with its flatteries; it deceives us even while caressing us, and promises much to perform nothing. But, even if it should be true to its promises, would they be truly worthy of our attachment, seeing that they are always either false or vain, or low or light or fleeting, and frequently possess all those faults together? They are false; for no goods can be called true except those that render us better, and these often make us worse, and consequently unhappy. They are vain, since they are made for us, and not we for them: they are means for us to use, but not the end after which we must strive, and so we cannot really enjoy them, for they cannot fill our hearts, nor be an enduring happiness. They are low, inasmuch as they are gross and material, and therefore cannot be in harmony with a spiritual substance like our soul, nor constitute its true happiness. They are light and trivial, and how can they satisfy the desires of man,

which are boundless? How can they fill a heart which is, in some manner, of an infinite capacity, and which, consequently, can be satisfied only by an infinite good, which is God alone. Alas! how often has our own experience undeceived us concerning this matter! We have often enough ardently longed for some worldly good, and have had our desire satisfied, but have we found contentment? Has not possession of these goods often made us despise them, and the enjoyment of them led to a disgust for them? Finally, these goods are shortlived: even when they seem to be most substantial and real, they cannot give us any perfect happiness because they cannot last for ever. They either pass away of themselves because they are by nature frail and perishable, or they are liable to be destroyed by any of the countless accidents that are continually befalling us, or else death snatches us away from them. Those possessions, which pass away with time, cannot impart a happiness which shall endure when time shall have passed away. Nothing mortal can satisfy an immortal soul.

But let us consider each of these things that are so highly prized among men by itself; and to see their emptiness and vanity, let us consider in the first place that which holds the highest rank among earthly goods, honors, reputation, and the esteem of men. And what can be more hollow and vain? As to honors, however a man may be crowned with them, however high an elevation he may have attained, is he ever contented? The higher he rises, the higher he wishes to rise: careless of all beneath

him his ambition makes him look only to what is above him; and he is more troubled to see another elevated above himself, than he is satisfied to see a multitude below him. Consider how much that man who seems the happiest in his elevation must be vexed and alarmed by the constant desire of rising still higher, the fear of falling, and the example of so many who seemed so firmly fixed in their fame and high positions and yet have fallen irrecoverably. Even the most prosperous from time to time are troubled in spite of themselves by that importunate thought: *How long will these things last?* This is a terrible counterpoise to a fortune apparently brilliant, and one which frequently renders prosperous people more sensible to the fear of losing their possessions than they are to the enjoyment of them.

If we reflect upon it, what can be more vain and frivolous than reputation and the esteem of the world? If one person esteems me, another despises me: for who has ever had the approbation of the whole world? And if the multitude has a high opinion of me, what is, after all, the multitude but a crowd of blind, passionate, and capricious people, who esteem me to-day, but are just as likely to spurn me to-morrow? But, even if their esteem were most sincere and constant, would it make me really better or happier? It is not the judgment of others, but my own, that will make me happy. If others applaud me when my own conscience condemns me, of what service is their praise to me? So too, if I am satisfied with myself and think that I deserve the good opinion of men, if God frowns upon and condemns

me, how does it all benefit me? I am, in truth, only that which I am in the judgment of God; and to seek the applause of the world with too much eagerness, is often enough to incur the disapprobation of God, and who would wish to have the praise of men at such a cost as that?

Is there anything more substantial or satisfactory in riches and worldly possessions? Into what difficulties do they not lead us! We seek after them with eagerness, we obtain them with hard labor, we possess and preserve them only with constant anxiety, and the more we enjoy them, the deeper is our sorrow at their loss. There are passions that are stilled by the possession of the objects that excited them; but avarice is a devouring fire—an insatiable appetite that grows by what it feeds on. An avaricious man is like one who is afflicted with dropsy: the more a dropsical person drinks, the more he wishes to drink: water, instead of quenching his thirst, increases it: and it is the same with the miser; the more wealth he acquires, the more covetous he becomes. Who ever saw a miser who thought himself rich? Not satisfied with what he has, he is continually thinking of what he has not, and he always believes that he shall never have enough. And even if a man could succeed in being perfectly contented with his possessions, the simple thought that he is constantly in danger of losing them, and that death will inevitably snatch him before long from the enjoyment of them, is enough to destroy all real happiness in their possession.

As to worldly pleasures: *First.* They are either

sinful or dangerous. If they are sinful, how can we obtain any true happiness from a pleasure which much necessarily be effaced by a deep sorrow and the tears of a sincere penitence, or expiated by an everlasting punishment? If they are dangerous, can we think that man wise who would risk his life for the pleasure of eating a fruit, however delicious it might be, if he feared that it was poisonous? *Secondly.* Pleasures are either excessive or trivial. If they are excessive (aside from the fact that in this case they are commonly sinful), they darken the reason, they make the will unruly, they corrupt the heart, they throw all the powers of a man into disorder; if they are trivial, are they worth the effort and the sacrifice they cost? *Thirdly.* Pleasures are either continual or transient. If they are too continual, they cease to be pleasures; we either get accustomed to them, or grow weary of them, and the greatest of pleasures, from too long continuance, becomes a punishment. The most charming melody, the most agreeable conversation, the most amusing spectacle, would become tiresome if they lasted through a whole day. There are no persons who have less pleasure than those who are always in pursuit of it. Place a man in a beautiful house, situated in a delightful country, after he shall have dwelt there a month, the place will have lost half of its attractions: he will either find no more pleasure there or he will seem to have lost his sense of pleasure. If pleasures are transient, are they worth the trouble they cost? Is it worth while to hazard

an eternity (as is too often the case), for the pleasures of an hour?

Furthermore, there is no pleasure that is not in some way defective, or rather, there is no such thing as entire and complete pleasure. *First.* There is hardly any pleasure which is not imperfect. Most pleasures suppose in their very existence, a pain or a defect; we must be hungry to enjoy our meals; we should find no pleasure in warmth, if we had never suffered cold; a man who was constantly in repose would find no satisfaction therein,—for it is labor and fatigue that impart sweetness to rest. *Secondly.* There is no such thing as pure and complete pleasure: gaming diverts a man, but he is either chagrined by losing his money or he is disquieted by the fear of losing. There is pleasure in the possession of wealth, but if one does not spend liberally, he does not enjoy his wealth, and if he is too profuse, he is exposed to the danger of bankruptcy. If good living has its satisfactions, the intemperance which so often accompanies it draws many terrible consequences in its train, and the severe sickness which it often produces is a hard but useless penance to people who have no wish to do penance. The person who considers a tender and sincere attachment the highest pleasure of life is completely undeceived when he finds himself a prey to jealousy and solicitude, and sometimes to despair, when he sees that he must put up with the exactions, and contempt, and inconstancy of one whom he had made his idol.

Finally. How terrible are the consequences of

the impure pleasures of the flesh! For beyond the remorse of conscience, the darkening of the intellect, the hardening of the heart, the negligence or despair of salvation, the forgetfulness or contempt of God, which are their ordinary results; the scandals caused by them, the infamy to which they expose their victim, the division and desolation of families, the ruin of health by maladies alike painful and disgraceful, are the terrible price of the brief pleasure of the satisfying a shameful passion. They themselves punish their victim cruelly in this life, and then keep him for a severer and eternal punishment in the other.

CHAPTER V

Of the Means of Acquiring Contempt of the World

THE general means are the same as for the acquisition of the other virtues; the particular means are:

First. To meditate frequently on the motives which we have been considering in this book, which are abundantly capable of inspiring us with contempt of the world, if we give sufficient thought to them.

Secondly. To consult our own experience. For if we sound ourselves thoroughly,—if we ask our heart whether it has ever been perfectly contented in the possession of any of the goods promised us by the world, and most desired by it, it will, in good

faith, be obliged to avow that it has never found complete happiness therein.

Thirdly. We must accustom ourselves to look at all these attractive and enchanting possessions as we shall at the hour of death. The most fabulous piles of wealth, regarded from this point of view, will appear mean and contemptible, or rather will disappear entirely. Viewed by the light of eternity, exposed to the gleam of the blessed candle that will be placed at that time in our faltering hands, all worldly goods will lose their charms. Let us try to enter often, during our life, into the sentiments that will inspire us on our death-bed. A man in the full glow of health loves the world; the dying man despises it: whose judgment is the more just, that of the living, or that of the dying? What do you think now? What shall you think then?

Fourthly. We must keep before our eyes the shining examples of that large number of great men, of kings and princes, who, unable to find happiness or rest on the throne, or in the possession of great wealth, or in the midst of worldly pleasures,—have sought and found both in solitude, in flight from the world, and in privation of all perishable goods.

Fifthly. We must consider from time to time, the condition of the greatest, most powerful, and glorious monarchs at the hour of death or in the tomb. Dead or dying, they will preach to us the vanity of the world they loved in their earthly career.

CHAPTER VI

Various Acts of Contempt of the World

I. We must have an interior contempt for all external show, and all that has the appearance of grandeur, as being opposed to the state of Jesus Christ, which is one of humility and self-annihilation.

II. We must, on the contrary, have a great esteem and respect for everything like poverty and humiliation—for poor people and poor dwellings, etc., because all such matters are more in harmony with the poor and humble state of our blessed Lord.

III. We must seek neither the favor nor the friendship of the great; we must be more willing to converse with the poor than the rich, and to labor for their salvation; because there is less danger in laboring for the humble than for the great; and there is a greater profit in it, and more ease in approaching them.

IV. We must not push ourselves into affairs that may attract especial public attention, even under the pretext of zeal—unless, perchance, we may be urged thereto by the glory of God, by charity, or by obedience.

V. When we are obliged to take part in such affairs, we must endeavor to perform the most painful and least honorable portion of the service; and to act so that the success of the enterprise may be attributed to others rather than to ourselves.

VI. We must speak as little as possible of ourselves, never speaking to our own advantage or reporting any good act that we may have performed —except we are compelled to do so by necessity or by considerations for the edification of our neighbor.

VII. We must never do good before men, either to please them, or to obtain their approbation, for we must aim only at pleasing God.

VIII. We must take care not to make too much of our good actions, lest we should vitiate our good intentions, and self-love, caprice, and the wish to please men should mix themselves up in our best actions, rendering them hateful in the sight of God: and when we may even have done all that we ought (and who would dare to flatter himself that he had done his whole duty?) we must believe ourselves, according to our Lord's counsels, useless servants.

IX. We must always be more willing to do good secretly than openly.

X. We must be perfectly content with the few talents that God has given us, and with the little success that may attend our efforts,—persuaded that we may often glorify God more worthily by humbly accepting our abjection than by obtaining the most splendid successes, which might perhaps make us vain and proud.

XI. We must, as far as possible, avoid the praise of men—we must fear it much, and receive it with pain and confusion, bearing in mind that the applause of the world is not the only recompense of our good actions, and taking heed lest it make us

lose our eternal reward. We must remember that the commendation of the world, if we seek it or rest contented with it, only draws upon us the condemnation of God.

XII. When God favors us with any success, the greater it is, the more we must humiliate ourselves before God, and stand abashed to think that God, to manifest His power, condescends to use such weak instruments as ourselves; and we must refer all the glory to God, without reserve, remembering the word of our Lord to His disciples. *Rejoice not in this that spirits are subject unto you.* (Luke, x). We must not rejoice in the success obtained, but rather in the hope that our names are written in heaven.

XIII. When we are humiliated and despised by our fellow men, so far ought we to be from feeling afflicted and discouraged, that we should rejoice in it and love our abject condition, because we may be led through it into a state of conformity with our humiliated and suffering Saviour.

TREATISE THE EIGHTH

Of Mortification

CHAPTER I

Of the Nature and Object of Mortification

THE sacred Scriptures tell us that God made man right; that there was neither defect nor excess in him; the passions were subject to reason, and reason in its turn was obedient to God. Thus all was in perfect order: but the sin of our first parents made a discord in this marvelous harmony, and cast disorder into the spirit of man, overthrowing the subordination of the lower powers to the higher. It is the office of mortification to restore this divine order and (so to speak) to reëstablish man in the happiness of original justice: so that we may say that mortification is a supplement to original righteousness, that it repairs all the disorder caused by original sin, by subjecting the lower to the higher faculties, passion to reason, and reason to God; and that it makes man do with pain and severe effort that which original justice made him do not only without pain, but with pleasure.

Christian mortification is exercised upon four different objects: *first,* to regulate our pleasures; *secondly,* to govern our higher faculties; *thirdly,* to hold in subjection our lower faculties, our appetites and passions; *fourthly,* it is exercised upon our senses to mortify them, and upon the laborious duties of our daily life to make us faithful to them.

The *first* exercise of Christian mortification is then to regulate our pleasures. Our pleasures would be for the most part innocent if we were so ourselves, but the taint of original sin in the heart and body of man has infected them and made a large part of them either sinful or dangerous.

Now mortification obliges us, in the first place, to cut off absolutely all sinful pleasures: indeed a regard for our own interest would prompt us to do so. For how can we take any real pleasure in an act which must necessarily be atoned for in this life by a sincere and lively repentance and a heartfelt sorrow, or which will inevitably entail upon us an eternity of suffering in the life to come? In the second place, mortification obliges us to shun, as much as possible, all dangerous pleasures, such as spectacles, balls, worldly conversations, games of chance, and games which excite our passions inordinately. What man would wish to taste of a dish, however grateful it might be to his palate, if there were room to fear that it had been poisoned? Mortification prompts us, in the third place, to moderate our pleasures when they become too great or too continual; for, however innocent they may appear in themselves, they cease to be good pleasures when

they become excessive, and they commonly produce in the heart a disposition to languor and slothfulness, which, besides being contrary to the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of penance, so diminishes the vigor of the soul, and undermines our courage, that we become incapable of resistance to our passions and to all the enemies of our salvation. Finally, mortification compels us sometimes to deprive ourselves of the most legitimate and innocent pleasures, to expiate, as St. Gregory says, the false liberty that we have taken in giving ourselves up to sinful and dangerous diversions.

The *second* function of mortification is to govern our superior faculties, that is to say, our understanding and our will. It governs the understanding by placing limits to its curiosity, by compelling it frequently to renounce its own light, to be deaf to its own voice, and to place itself under the yoke of faith. Finally, it moderates our attachment to our own opinions and entirely destroys stubbornness.

Mortification governs the will in obliging it to renounce its natural inclinations when they are opposed to the law of God, and even when they are obstacles to our perfection;—to resist a thousand vain and frivolous desires; and to moderate even those desires that are good, thus keeping us from being indiscreet in our zeal;—to repress any excess of sensibility or ardor which may manifest itself in our best affections; and finally, in all things to submit itself, as being a corrupt, feeble, and blind will, to the will of God, which is infinitely wise and holy.

The *third* exercise of mortification is to govern the inferior faculties,—the imagination and the appetites. It governs the imagination by stopping its wanderings,—not suffering it to occupy itself with vain trifles and above all with those things that are dangerous or sinful;—and by restraining its vagaries and extravagances, thus reducing it to a sort of captivity. But one of the chief offices of mortification is to govern the lower appetites and the passions springing from them. Resistance to our passions ought to be the principal object of all our mortification,—particularly resistance to those which are the strongest and most dangerous. It ought to assist us to repress all irregular movements of our senses so that they may be prevented from interference with the light of reason and the determinations of the will. It ought to recall them to their duty, and if they escape from it, to punish them, by depriving them of the objects that led them astray. To war against our passions may be called the chief exercise of Christian mortification; and it ought to be zealous, continual, and unyielding. It should be zealous that it may not be repulsed by difficulties, continual so that not a day nor an hour may pass without its exercise, so that the motto of a true Christian ought to be that of St. Paul: *I die daily.* Lastly, it ought to be constant and unyielding, so as to terminate only with life itself, since we shall, as long as we live, have domestic foes to fight against. All devotion which does not lead to this warfare or assist us therein, is either a childish amusement or an illusion. Finally, it is the office of

mortification to check our wayward and humorsome caprices, to watch over and repress all the movements of our self-love, and those insidious selfish considerations which are constantly mixing themselves up with our best actions.

The *fourth* exercise of mortification is to hold the flesh in due subjection to the spirit, to curb it when it grows rebellious, to chastise it when it has revolted, by afflicting it with fasts and other austerities which the spirit of penance and the fear of offending God inspire in the hearts of those who are really under the influence of this spirit; and lastly, to treat it like a rebellious slave, insolent enough to wish to govern, when it was made only to serve and obey.

Mortification also assists us to restrain the wanderings of our senses by mortifying them, particularly those of sight, taste, and touch, which excite our passions most easily, and which flatter our sensuality and lead us into the worst disorders. Mortification is exercised in this regard by refusing to our senses those objects which are most pleasing to them, and which always lead them astray.

Last of all, Christian mortification subjects us to all the cares and ills and sorrows inseparable from our state of life and our employment, and to all that is necessary to the performance of our duties, particularly of our obligations as Christians, if we do not think it sufficient for us merely to bear the Christian name.

CHAPTER II

Of the First Motive of Mortification—the Teaching of Jesus Christ Concerning It

THERE is no virtue more particularly recommended by our blessed Lord than mortification. A large part of the Gospel is devoted to teaching us the necessity of it, and nothing is more strongly expressed or more earnestly commended. The Gospel speaks only of the cross of sufferings, of death, of abnegation, of hatred of self, of the violence we must do to ourselves, of the narrow way which we must certainly traverse.

Our blessed Saviour proposes to us the first exercise of mortification by the words with which He condemns worldly joy and pleasures: *Wo unto you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Wo unto you that are filled. Wo unto you that laugh.* On the other hand, He declares that those who, through a true spirit of penance and mortification, are in sadness, in tears, and in privation of worldly pleasures, are truly blessed. *Blessed are they that mourn* (Matt., v). *Blessed are ye that weep now* (Luke, vi).

Our blessed Lord recommends to us the second and third exercises of mortification when He says: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; for he that shall lose his life, for my sake, shall save it* (Luke,

ix). He insists upon the same thing when He assures us that from the days of St. John the Baptist (that is, after the Gospel began to be preached) *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.* Likewise, when He says also that the gate of the way of salvation is narrow, and that there are few who enter it, and exhorts us to strive to be among the few. Now, of what does Jesus Christ wish to remind us when He insists so earnestly on the necessity of bearing our cross, of renouncing ourselves, of entering into the narrow way, of doing violence to ourselves, unless it be the obligation to renounce our own will, to repress our natural inclinations; because, springing, as they do, from a corrupt source, they are almost always irregular; and to resist constantly our passions, especially those that are most violent and dangerous, because they usually drag us into mortal sin.

Lastly, our blessed Lord exhorts us to the fourth exercise of mortification, when He says that we must hate our own life and destroy it—meaning thereby the sensual life and the desires of the flesh. This is what St. Paul means when he says that *they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences* (Gal., v). So, too, our Lord uses His comparison of the grain of wheat, to show us that as grain, unless it be thrown into the earth and die, does not live again and become fruitful, so also we, unless we mortify our flesh constantly, unless we die to all our irregular inclinations, cannot rise again to a new life, nor bring forth any fruit.

CHAPTER III

Of the Second Motive of Mortification—the Example of Jesus Christ

First. Our blessed Saviour's self-denial of pleasure was entire and continual: the Gospel makes no mention of His ever having given any time to pleasure. It tells us that He often wept; but it never speaks of His having laughed, nor of His having taken any recreation, even the most innocent, for the relaxation of His mind and body. St. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ did not seek His own satisfaction, that He did not please Himself.

Secondly. In regard to the mortification of the higher and lower faculties, as there was nothing in our Lord which was not perfectly regular and harmonious, it would seem as if there were nothing in Him to be mortified: nevertheless, He unceasingly renounced His own will, reasonable and holy as it was, and He declared that He came upon earth not to do His own will, but that of His Father who sent Him: having been obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He sacrificed also His natural and perfectly regulated inclinations, such as those which tended to the preservation of His life and His glory, to the glory of His Father and the salvation of mankind. He permitted His passions not to revolt, it is true, but to be so moved at the sight of those things that were opposed to them, that in con-

quering them He was obliged to use such violence that He was bathed in a sweat of blood—that He might encourage us and teach us how to resist and overcome our own: and the Apostle of the Gentiles uses the same motive to animate us to war bravely against all our passions: *For think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin* (Heb., xii).

Thirdly. As to mortification of the flesh and the senses, although in our blessed Lord, the flesh was most pure and submissive to the spirit, and His senses perfectly well regulated, so that no irregular movement deserving correction or punishment, could escape them; yet did He frequently mortify them, so that His life was a continued denial of self, and a model of severe austerity. The devout author of the "Imitation of Christ," says that "the whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom."

In the exercise of mortification of the senses our blessed Lord dwelt during nine months in the womb of His mother, without the use of His senses, although from the beginning He had a perfect knowledge of everything. He was born in a stable, was laid upon straw in a manger, at the severest season of the year, without any of those comforts which even the poorest are able to procure at such a time. Shortly after His birth, He wished to suffer and to shed His blood in submitting to the pain of circumcision. What must He not have suffered in the flight into Egypt, and during an exile of seven years

among strangers and idolaters? What life could be more laborious and mortified than that which He led for thirty years in the shop of St. Joseph, rendering those services which the children of the poor render to their parents, working at St. Joseph's trade, and earning His bread by the sweat of His brow? He left his seclusion only to enter into one more rigorous, retiring into a desert, where He fasted during forty days, using His divine power to enable Him to sustain His strength, but not to mitigate or prevent the pangs of hunger. During this time He occupied Himself in prayer, which He interrupted only to take a short repose upon the hard cold ground,—and in many other exercises of mortification suggested by the spirit of penance which animated Him.

If His public life appears less austere than that of St. John Baptist, it was not less painful; for He endured all the labors and fatigues of the evangelical life, toiling along on foot from village to village, in the most inclement weather, over rough roads, through lonely deserts, under the burning sun. Indeed, the Gospels expressly tell us of His fatigue: *Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well* (John, iv). Furthermore, He subsisted on alms, living on barley bread and the coarsest food, frequently lacking the necessaries of life, as at the time when hunger compelled the Apostles to take the ears of corn in passing through the fields,—and finally having no place to repose Himself after His labors. Can we imagine a life more painful, more mortified, more austere?

CHAPTER IV

Other Motives of Mortification

FIRST. We ought to mortify ourselves because we are Christians. The grace of Christianity, whether we regard it in its source, which is Jesus Christ Himself, or in the sacrament by which we receive it, that is Baptism,—engages us to practice mortification. The principle of the grace that makes us Christians is a redeeming God, that is to say, a suffering and a crucified God. The grace bestowed on man in the state of original innocence, was the grace of God, the Creator; that is to say, of a God infinitely glorious and happy;—and therefore, to sustain a harmony with its principle, it was a grace of pleasure, of happiness, and of glory, which would have led man from the honors and pleasures of this life, to an infinite and eternal happiness. But, as the grace that makes us Christians, is the grace of God the Redeemer, that is of a God, suffering and dying on the Cross, and this grace also must be in harmony with its source;—it must necessarily conduct us to the happiness of another life through the crosses and mortifications of this. Indeed, can we persuade ourselves that the grace that proceeds from a leader crowned with thorns permits us to crown ourselves with roses? *It is not meet,* as St. Bernard says, *that delicate members should exist under a thorn-crowned head.* If we look at the grace of Christianity, in its relation to the sacrament by

which it is conferred—that is Baptism, we shall find another reason why we ought to labor to mortify ourselves: for, as St. Paul says: *All we that are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death. For we are buried together with Him by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life* (Rom., vi). Thus, according to the Apostle, this sacrament of life is a sacrament of death, and is at the same time, to us, both a cradle and a tomb, since in giving us the life and grace of Christianity, it engages us to die to the senses and to our corrupt nature: and it is furthermore pointed out to us in the renunciations we make in baptism; for in obliging us to renounce Satan and his works, the world and its pomps, does it not bind us to cast away the pleasures of the flesh and the vanities of the world? And is not this an exercise of mortification?

Secondly. We ought to give ourselves up to the practice of mortification, because we are sinners. If we are sinners we ought to endeavor to satisfy the justice of God and to win His mercy by the expiation of our sins;—and how can we expiate our sins but by penitence? *What is a sinner,* said Tertullian, *but a man born for penance?* and can he do penance without mortifying himself? He must punish and mortify the passions which have plunged him into so many irregularities: he must afflict his senses which have so often led him astray: he must chastise his flesh which has so frequently revolted and captivated his heart and made him fall into sin.

This is the advice of St. Paul, when he exhorts us that, as we have made the members of our body the servants of sin and impurity, we should now make them serve justice and penance for our sanctification.

Thirdly. We must not only devote ourselves to mortification because we have been sinners, but also to prevent our being sinners in future. Mortification is not only a remedy for past evils, but a preventive of future ones. As descendants of Adam and inheritors of original sin, we have a strong repugnance to good and an inclination to evil; we can yield to neither without falling into great disorders; neither can we resist either of them without doing violence to ourselves, and constantly warring against our passions; and this is the principal exercise of Christian mortification. We are born proud, ambitious, passionate, vindictive, selfish, sensual, and slothful: this is what we are naturally, and this is what we must cease to be if we wish to be true Christians and to work efficaciously for our salvation. Now, to accomplish this, must we not watch unceasingly over ourselves? must we not be in a constant struggle with self, and consequently in a perpetual exercise of mortification?

Fourthly. We ought to give ourselves up to mortification because we have great and continual dangers to avoid and many powerful enemies to fight against. We are constantly walking on the edge of a precipice and in the midst of snares and pitfalls: can we keep clear of the dangers that beset us without an extraordinary vigilance and caution?

And does not this vigilance suppose continual mortification? We have terrible enemies to fight against —the world, which we esteem too highly, the flesh which we love too tenderly, the demon whom we do not fear enough: will these foes who challenge us to a continual warfare if we do not yield to them and perish, will they allow us to lead an easy and inactive life? Do they not rather arouse us to a constant fear, and an unceasing vigilance and resistance?

Fifthly. We ought to practice mortification, because we have difficult and painful duties to discharge. A wife is obliged to be kind and submissive to her husband, even when he does not seem, by his conduct, worthy to direct the education of his children and the affairs of his family. To do this she must moderate her love of pleasure, practice restraint, and cut off many useless visits: in short, she must mortify herself. A husband ought to be animated with a spirit of condescension towards his wife; he ought to bear with her weaknesses, provide for the education and support of his children, and set them a good example. To this end, he must watch carefully over himself, moderate his expenses, cut off, or at least regulate his pleasures: and is a man capable of such self-subjugation as this if he mortifies himself in nothing? A wealthy man or one who is high in authority is held as much as others, and sometimes even more, to the practice of mortification;—for ought he not to sacrifice his property, his time, his repose, his pleasures, and sometimes his health even to the public good? If he

follows his caprices, if he loves rest, if he gives himself up to pleasure, does he satisfy the obligations of his state? Every Christian must forgive injuries, must love his enemies, must forsake even his best friends if they turn away from God, must pluck out his eye if it is an occasion of scandal to him, must often make amends that dishonor and incommode him: and can all this be done without doing violence to himself? And what is this violence but the most essential practice of mortification?

CHAPTER V.

On the Means of Acquiring Mortification

As nobody (according to St. Paul) naturally hates his own flesh, but, on the contrary, every one makes it his especial care to cherish it and treat it tenderly, it must necessarily require a great effort and a strong resolution to mortify ourselves: for the object of mortification is the crucifixion of our flesh by the repression of all its morbid desires and irregular movements. This, as St. Paul says, ought to be one of the chief aims of a Christian; it is for this that he tells us that all those who are truly Christ's have crucified their flesh with its sinful desires. Therefore we ought to try to succeed in this great but difficult work, and to leave no means unemployed which may aid us therein.

We can be greatly helped in this exercise by bear-

ing in mind that we are constantly in the presence of God, for love of whom we mortify ourselves; by frequently praying to Him that He will strengthen and support us in this difficult combat against ourselves; by frequently and attentively reading the Gospels, and by meditating assiduously upon the admirable maxims touching the necessity of mortification, which our blessed Saviour there proposes to us upon almost every page, and illustrates by His own high example. For, truly, it requires the eloquence of a God to convince us of the truth of this necessity of mortification, which is so contrary to the inclinations of our nature, and which even appears contradictory to human reason itself: and we need the example of a God to lead us to put its difficult precepts in practice. Hence we cannot read the holy Gospel too much nor meditate too often upon its divine teachings upon the necessity of mortification: but we cannot really meditate upon them without penetrating deeply into them; neither can we penetrate them without feeling them, nor feel them without being animated to practice them. We read in the lives of the Fathers of the desert, that one of those holy hermits, having despoiled himself of all that he possessed, and having even given away his clothes to the poor, had reserved for himself only the book of the holy Gospels. When he was asked who had robbed him of everything and reduced him to such a state as that, he answered by showing the Gospel and saying: "This is He who has taken everything from me." The teaching of that divine book alone can oblige us to despoil our-

selves of the old man by the continual self-renunciation to which our blessed Lord exhorts us, and to crucify our flesh by an unceasing exercise of mortification.

Although Communion is a general means for the acquisition of all virtues, it is a special help for us in our endeavors to obtain the spirit of mortification. Our blessed Lord gives us great examples of this in the mortification which He practices in the Blessed Sacrament. In that He daily offers Himself for the glory of His Father and for our salvation, and dies a mystical death. What nobler example or more powerful motive of mortification could we have! Jesus Christ dwells in the Holy Eucharist in a state of continual mortification. He is dependent upon the will of others, being obedient to the word of a priest, although he may be a wicked man: He is not in the Eucharist, master of His own movements, but is completely subject to others: He dwells therein in the possession of all His faculties, but without the power to exercise them: He has eyes without vision, tongue without speech; and, although He gives us life and is living of Himself, He is there in a state of death, whether we regard Him as united to the inanimate species of the Sacrament, or as the victim of the Sacrifice for love of us. Thus, at the same time that He offers us these examples of mortification, He merits and procures for us by these examples, the graces necessary to imitate them. For this reason, the holy Fathers teach us that one of the principal effects of a good Communion is to aid us to die to ourselves and to all the lusts of the flesh, and

live only in Christ and for Him, according to His word: *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me* (John, vi). We see this effect of the Blessed Sacrament in St. Paul, who said that it was no longer he who lived, but Jesus Christ who lived in him.

An excellent means to acquire mortification is to accustom ourselves to practice it in small matters. This practice of self-abnegation, by which a soul, touched with a desire to advance in perfection, prepares to die to itself,—is one strongly commended by the masters of the spiritual life. We will therefore conclude this treatise by prescribing a practice of self-denial in certain actions of our daily life.

CHAPTER VI

Practice of Self-denial: Various Acts of Mortification

I. To moderate our natural activity and zeal, even in regard to our best undertakings.

II. To relinquish any useless project, to the execution of *which we feel* strongly inclined; and to suspend our action, in case of a good and useful one, so that we may act from a fixed principle, rather than from a natural enthusiasm.

III. To deprive ourselves of some gratification, or of the satisfaction of curiosity concerning any-

thing whatever, after the example of St. Francis Borgia, who, being very fond of hawking, often, from a spirit of mortification, deprived himself of the innocent pleasure of seeing the hawk seize his prey, by closing his eyes at the moment; in which action he imitated David that great Saint and King, who, overcome with thirst, mortified himself, and made a sacrifice to the Lord by pouring out upon the ground the water which had been obtained for him with great labor and danger.

IV. To restrain our anxiety to hear the news and the common rumors of the day, particularly if they affect the good name of our neighbors.

V. To guard our eyes carefully, never allowing them to rest upon any dangerous or impure object.

VI. Not to indulge in raillery in conversation, however harmless or agreeable it may be:—particularly with persons with whom we are not on perfectly good terms.

VII. To withhold at times a witticism which might raise our own reputation, and please the hearers, particularly if it would be uncharitable or might encourage our vanity.

VIII. To behave kindly and politely towards those whom we dislike or who have used us ill; and not to avoid meeting them.

IX. To avoid making complaints to persons in whom we confide, that we may relieve our hearts of their burden.

X. Not to complain of our food when it is not entirely to our liking, remembering that it is not, after all, so bad as the gall which our blessed Lord took

for love of us: and to complain, when it is unavoidably necessary, without bitterness or anger.

XI. Not to seek delicate food, not to eat with avidity, and to shun all sensuality in our eating: mortifying ourselves always in something, particularly in food that may be hurtful to us.

XII. To abstain from the reading of all dangerous books, of those which will only satisfy a vain curiosity, and especially of those which may excite the passions.

XIII. To abandon entirely all dangerous pleasures, and to moderate those that are innocent, abstaining from them at times for a penance and mortification.

XIV. Never to seek, and sometimes even to avoid agreeable odors, concerts of music, and all that can flatter the senses and enervate the heart.

XV. Never to occupy ourselves with vain and useless thoughts, although they may be harmless in themselves; and to endeavor as much as possible to restrain the wanderings of our imagination.

XVI. To follow with fidelity the rule of life prescribed by our director, and never to dispense with the observance of it, from our own inconstancy or from weariness.

XVII. To quit whatever we may be engaged in, as soon as the time shall come for our religious exercises; that is, when we can do so without wronging any other person or behaving uncharitably.

XVIII. To moderate our solicitude concerning ourselves, and our extreme sensibility to petty ills, which make us complain and like to be pitied.

XIX. Not to be too strongly attached to anything that gives us great pleasure, but to try to disengage our mind and heart from it, and by turning towards God, to renounce it altogether.

XX. To repress our propensity to talkativeness, to speak little, and that without haste or too much warmth.

XXI. To perform certain regular penances, and never to omit them without good reason and by the advice of our director.

XXII. Never to place ourselves in immodest postures, though they may be comfortable.

XXIII. Never to reprove any person when we feel at all moved, but to wait till we are perfectly calm.

XXIV. To keep silence in our trials, and not to seek for consolations with too much anxiety and earnestness.

XXV. Never to excuse ourselves unless we are obliged to do so by considerations of obedience, or of charity, or of edification of our neighbor.

Although the most of the things composing this practice of self-denial are very easy and light, yet it is undeniably true, by experience, that a soul which is faithfully exercised in it will surely arrive in a short time at a high state of perfection: because this exercise accustoms a person by degrees to overcome his caprices and to die to himself, and establishes in the heart, upon the ruins of selfishness, a perfect love of God.

TREATISE THE NINTH

Of the Virtue of Poverty

CHAPTER I

Of the Nature of this Virtue

POVERTY is a virtue, the object of which is to moderate the cupidity of man, and to regulate his attachment to riches and all worldly possessions. There are two kinds of poverty: the first is of counsel and of perfection, and this is properly speaking religious poverty, which obliges us not only to detach ourselves from worldly goods, but also to despoil ourselves of them that we may follow the instruction which our blessed Lord gave to the young man in the Gospel: *If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor* (Matt., xix). The second is of obligation, and is what we may call Christian poverty: it permits us to possess wealth, but forbids an inordinate attachment to it. The first applies only to those who have entered the religious state, and is of counsel; the second is *applicable to all Christians,* and is of precept.

Christian poverty, which is of precept, and is therefore binding upon every Christian, prompts us to detach ourselves in such a manner from worldly possessions that our hearts shall not cling to them, but that, according to the instruction of St. Paul, we shall possess our goods as though we possessed them not, and use this world as if we used it not. This detachment obliges the Christian, *first,* to restrain his desires for the acquisition of riches, to curb his zeal in amassing them, to avoid injustice in acquiring or retaining them, to preserve them with little anxiety, to dispense them discreetly and charitably, and to lose them without great sorrow. *Secondly.* This virtue obliges all Christians to moderate their expenses, regulating them according to their state and condition, to avoid luxury in their clothes, their houses, and furniture, bearing in mind that as Christians, by their baptismal vows they renounced the world and its pomps, and remembering that the superfluity of the rich is the necessity of the poor, and that to deprive them of it is to rob them. *Thirdly.* This virtue engages the rich to make a good use of their wealth, to employ it in comforting the wretched, to relieve Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor; as He Himself assures us that everything that we give to the least of His servants is given to Himself—that the rich are only stewards of their possessions which truly belong to God, who commands them to share them with the poor; that we cannot fail in the discharge of this duty without injustice; that it is less an exercise of liberality on our parts, than the payment of a debt. *Fourthly.*

Christian poverty keeps the rich from growing proud of their wealth, and prompts them to humility by the thought of the contrast between their state and that of Jesus Christ, who wished to be born, to live, and to die in poverty: it teaches them that their state is full of obstacles to their salvation, because it is too commonly a state of pride, of ease, and of indulgence for one's self, and harshness towards the wants of others; and from that fact a state of reprobation;—and finally it reminds them that our blessed Lord pronounced a malediction upon the rich, meaning thereby those who were inordinately attached to their possessions.

Evangelical poverty, which pertains to those living in the religious state, obliges them, *first,* to possess nothing as their own, neither to give anything away nor to receive anything, neither to borrow nor to lend, and finally to make no absolute disposal of anything without the permission of their superiors; remembering that though they may have the use of certain things, they have no right of ownership to anything, and that they would commit a mortal sin if these were without permission to dispose of anything which would be sufficient in a case of theft to constitute a mortal sin. *Secondly.* Religious poverty obliges all who are bound to observe it, to live as if they had nothing of their own, to have nothing in their dwellings or in their furniture which approaches to luxury or vanity; nothing even that wears a look of worldly elegance; but to have everything about them set forth the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ. Does not the crucifix, which ought

to be the chief ornament of the chamber of every religious person, condemn by its nakedness (in which it pleased our blessed Lord to die) the luxury and vanity which appear in the persons and habitations of some who are dedicated to religion? *Thirdly.* Religious poverty obliges those who are bound to it, to have no attachment to the things that they are permitted to use: for there are some religious persons who have as great and sometimes even a greater love for certain trivial things than people of the world have for great riches,—in which they are less excusable than the latter, and are really less poor than they, since it is not the possession of property that is wrong, but the being inordinately attached to it. So God made known to a hermit, who, considering his own poverty, placed himself above St. Gregory the Great in the spiritual life,—that St. Gregory in the midst of his riches was really poorer than he, because he was more detached than he. *Finally.* Evangelical poverty obliges the religious to suffer without murmuring or impatience the effects of poverty and the want of anything whatever, and to rejoice in the thought that they are thereby made more conformable to Jesus Christ. It obliges them to content themselves with poor and plain things; for there are some religious persons who practice poverty in a very easy manner, having everything most comfortable, and taking good care that nothing shall ever be wanting to them,—thus securing for themselves all the advantages of wealth, without any of its embarrassments or inconveniences. But is this truly following our blessed

Lord in His poverty, and can these persons pretend to claim the reward He promises to the poor, because they bear the name, while they forget the actual practice of this virtue?

CHAPTER II

Of the First Motive of Poverty: The Teaching of Jesus Christ on this Virtue

OUR blessed Lord, in commencing His beatitudes with the declaration that the poor in spirit (that is, those whose hearts are detached from worldly goods) are blessed, established poverty of spirit as the foundation of evangelical perfection. On the contrary He prophesies woe to the rich, meaning those who suffer their hearts to be ensnared by the abundance of their possessions. A young man having asked our Lord what it was necessary to do to obtain everlasting life, received answer that it was necessary to keep the commandments of God: and he, saying that he had kept them from his youth, asked what further was wanting to him. Then Jesus told him that if he wished to be perfect he must sell what he had and give it to the poor, and follow Him. The Evangelist adds that he went away sad, because he had great possessions and was attached to them. It was this that obliged our blessed Saviour to declare that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Again, I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt., xix).

Jesus Christ forbids His disciples when they go to preach His Gospel, to take with them either gold or silver, or even to have two garments. He wishes them to labor for the salvation of souls without expecting or exacting any earthly recompense. He exhorts them not to lay up treasures on earth where rust and moth consume, and where thieves can carry them away, but in heaven, where they will be beyond the reach of thieves, or moth, or rust. Finally, in the history of the bad rich man, He shows us the danger of wealth when one is too much attached to it, and does not make a good use of it; and He shows us also the end to which it leads, that is hell, where a drop of water was refused to the unhappy rich man to quench his thirst, because he had refused to succor the necessities of Lazarus.

CHAPTER III

The Example of Jesus Christ Concerning Poverty

IT was with reason that our blessed Lord declared by the mouth of His Psalmist, that He was *poor and in labors from His youth* (Ps. lxxxvii); for He wished to be born in the most abject poverty conceivable; and, as if it would have been too easy and luxurious to be born in the humble dwelling of an

artisan with the few comforts that would there be found, He so disposed matters in His providence, that His blessed mother, finding herself far from home, without friends, and uncared for by the people among whom she was sojourning, was obliged to give birth to her divine Son in an abandoned stable, in the darkness of the night, without fire in the midst of winter, without any human comforts, and to borrow a little hay and straw to lay her new-born child upon; so that without exaggeration we can say that Jesus Christ, the king of heaven and earth, was reduced to a lower depth of poverty than was ever known to the world: for common humanity does not allow even the most wretched at such a time as that to suffer such wants, as did Jesus Christ and His sinless mother. And our blessed Saviour was hardly less poor in His life than He was in His birth: He spent thirty years of His life in a workshop, following a laborious trade, gaining His subsistence by the labor of His hands and the sweat of His brow; having nothing about Him, either in His person or His way of life, but what told of poverty.

His public life was not less marked by poverty than His hidden life: He had not even a house to which He could retire to rest Himself after His great labors, as He says: *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the son of man hath not where to lay his head* (Matt., viii). He was frequently obliged to pass the night in the deserts and upon the mountains. He lived upon alms, and everything about Him spoke of the abject poverty which He professed. He ate ordinarily the coarsest

of bread, and sometimes, to satisfy His love for poverty, He allowed Himself to lack even that; as in the case when the Apostles were obliged to take the ears of corn to appease their hunger.

Finally, in His passion, He was despoiled of all His clothes, which His murderers shared among themselves, and He died naked upon the cross, nothing being left to Him but a crown of thorns, the nails that pierced Him, and all the pain and ignominy of such a death. Thus, as the Apostle says, our Lord Jesus Christ, *being rich, became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might become rich* (2 Cor., viii).

CHAPTER IV

Of Some Other Motives of this Virtue

AS cupidity (or the desire of money) is, according to St. Paul, the source of all evils and all vices, so poverty and perfect detachment from worldly possessions are the source of all good and the principle of every virtue. Cupidity is the root of all evils: from it spring hatred, revenge, quarrels, estrangements, lawsuits which ruin families, and wars which overthrow kingdoms. There is likewise no vice into which this lust for gain will not lead us. Those who wish to become rich, says the Apostle, fall into temptation, they are entrapped in the snares of the devil, and are consumed by useless and pernicious longings which are the cause of their

fall and their damnation. A rich man who is attached to his wealth is almost always proud. What cannot a rich man do? And when one can do so much, he naturally prides himself in his power, sets himself above all others, despises the poor, and treats them with disdain, if not with harshness. Riches awaken ambition: for what place is there to which a wealthy man may not attain? Wealth is the road to every honor. It places a man in high position, the duties of which he is unqualified to perform, and as he acquired his place without any merit except his riches, he exercises with injustice what he holds without capacity. It is seldom that we see a rich man (that is a man who rests in his possessions) who is not a voluptuary, and who does not give himself up to sinful pleasures. A rich man can obtain all that he desires: and what is there which a rich and unscrupulous pleasure-seeker will not wish for? The most shameful passions are easily satisfied when it can be done with facility and impunity; and wealth enables it to be done. That man is in great danger of losing both faith and hope and all spiritual goods, who has an excess of zeal for amassing earthly goods: he soon forgets his salvation, if he allows himself to think constantly of his fortune, and he cannot be awakened to the desire of heavenly riches, when he is eaten up by a lust for worldly wealth. He is, indeed, in danger of ceasing to be a Christian when he gives himself up to his passion for gain, as the Apostle says: *Some coveting* [*riches*] *have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows* (1 Tim., vi).

But poverty is, on the contrary, the source of every virtue. A man who is truly poor in spirit and sincerely detached from worldly possessions is always humble, and there is nothing about him which savors of pride—for poverty of spirit is always accompanied by humility. Those who are truly poor are in a continual exercise of patience and mortification, and are consequently in the way of practicing and acquiring many virtues. Nothing marks so clearly the sincerity and liveliness of our faith, as allowing ourselves to be governed by the Gospel when it teaches us a virtue so contrary to our cupidity and all our natural inclinations as poverty and the relinquishment of everything to follow Christ. We can see that it is much easier for the poor than for the rich to believe a Gospel which preaches so strongly detachment from riches and contempt for them. Neither is it difficult for the poor to practice the virtue of hope. One who despises and even gives up voluntarily his earthly possessions, is strongly disposed to hope for eternal blessings: and when he is no longer held down to earth, he finds a continual pleasure in thinking of, and aspiring to, heaven. As nothing is more opposed to charity than cupidity, so nothing is better calculated to increase charity than poverty. This is true love of God—to prefer Him to everything else, to give up all for Him, to desire no heritage, no other possession but Him, and to be able to say with the Psalmist: *For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the*

God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever (Ps. lxxii).

An excessive attachment to earthly goods renders a man unhappy; his constant desire to increase his property, disquiets him more and more; the management and preservation of it embarrasses him, the fear of losing it torments him, and finally, the loss of his wealth, when it happens, as it does too often, plunges him into despair: on the other hand, poverty of spirit and perfect detachment from wealth makes a man truly happy because it puts him out of reach of misfortune. It is true contentment when a man wants nothing, when he has all he wishes for, so that he can desire nothing; and this is the disposition of a man truly poor in spirit—the disposition attributed by the Apostle to the truly faithful: *As having nothing and possessing all things* (2 Cor., vi); for the cutting off of every desire makes a man truly rich. This is the hundred fold that our blessed Lord promises to the poor, with the assurance of everlasting life.

Finally, that which renders the state of the voluntarily poor infinitely preferable to that of the rich, is the difference of the dispositions in which they generally are in the hour of death. The rich man is held to earth by each and all of his possessions, and to separate him from them is like tearing him asunder. It is for this reason that Holy Scripture, to express the violence which a man who is attached to his goods suffers in dying, says that his soul is *required,* is exacted of him; *that the riches which he*

hath swallowed, he shall vomit up (Job, xx); and that, not only in his dying hour will he be tormented, but the anticipation and dread of separation from his wealth will, from time to time, cruelly haunt him. *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions* (Eccles., xli). But on the contrary, a man who is truly poor, who is perfectly detached from worldly goods, enjoys a wonderful peace in the hour of death: he fears nothing, he is held back by nothing, he has put to flight the sorrows of death by anticipating and meeting them. Death finds him either despoiled of everything or detached from it, and so it is unable to distress him with any deprivation: he leaves without regret the perishable goods which he has long before renounced in his heart, to enter upon the enjoyment of those eternal possessions which he has so long and so earnestly desired

CHAPTER V

Of the Means of Acquiring the Virtue of Poverty

THE *first* method of acquiring the virtue of poverty is to meditate frequently upon the maxims and examples of our blessed Lord concerning this virtue, and above all often to fix our eyes and hearts upon the crucifix, to contemplate there the God-man dying naked upon the Cross.

The *second* method is to bear in mind the vanity and frailty of earthly wealth: for how can we attach

ourselves to things which cannot satisfy us, and which, even if they did, cannot long endure?

The *third* method is to try constantly to feel the vanity of these things now as we shall at the hour of death: then we shall see and appreciate the nothingness of all worldly wealth, and all our thoughts will be changed. *For when he shall die, he shall take nothing away, nor shall his glory descend with him* (Ps. xlviii).

The *fourth* method is frequently to consider the state of the wealthy as a state of opposition to the state of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore a subject of fear and of humiliation.

The *fifth* method is, if one is rich, to make a good use of his wealth by assisting the poor liberally. This is a means alike easy and efficacious, to make amends for any former bad use to which we may have put our riches in times past, as also to prevent the dangers to which wealth exposes its possessors, and to guarantee our security from the curse pronounced by our Lord against the rich. It also helps a man to detach himself from love of wealth. He who despoils himself by his abundant alms proves thereby either that he is not inordinately fond of riches, or that at least he wishes to detach himself from them.

The *sixth* method is, if one is poor, as all are who have entered the religious state,—to esteem and to love the state of poverty as one of conformity with Jesus Christ, and therefore a most holy and happy state:—to cut off all superfluities, to confine ourselves simply to what is necessary, and even to

suffer the need of such things if it pleases God to visit us;—to take for ourselves the poorest, and least convenient things when we have a choice; and finally, to keep nothing about us that savors of vanity or luxury, and when we feel the least inordinate attachment springing up within us to resist and conquer it without delay.

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